



General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

61st plenary meeting

Tuesday, 14 November 2000, 10 a.m.

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Official Records

President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Shihab (Maldives) Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 15 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(b) Election of one member of the Economic and Social Council

Letter from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/55/523)

The Acting President: In connection with the General Assembly's consideration of the item before it, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/55/523, containing a letter dated 20 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly.

In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Greece announces that Greece would like to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for the years 2001 and 2002 in favour of Malta.

As a result, a vacancy occurs, and a new member must therefore be elected for the remaining period of two years, commencing on 1 January 2001.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2847 (XXVI) of 20 December

1971, and taking into account the fact that the vacancy occurs from among the Western European and other States, the new member should be elected from that region.

I should like to inform the Assembly that the candidate which receives a two-thirds majority of members present and voting will be declared elected. In the case of a tie vote, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding the vacancy, the Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October has informed the Secretariat that the Group has endorsed Malta.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



We shall now begin the voting process. Ballot papers will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers and to write on them the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. A ballot paper containing more than one name from the region will be declared invalid. Names of Member States on a ballot paper which do not belong to that region will not be counted at all.

*At the invitation of the Acting President,
Ms. Romulus (Haiti), Mr. Al Yassin (Kuwait) and
Mr. Bambissa (Mozambique) acted as tellers.*

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and
resumed at 11 a.m.*

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

<i>Western European and other States</i>	
Number of ballot papers:	127
Number of invalid ballots:	2
Number of valid ballots:	125
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	125
Required two-thirds majority:	84
Number of votes obtained:	
Malta	125

*Having obtained the required two-thirds majority,
Malta was elected a member of the Economic and
Social Council for a two-year term beginning
1 January 2001.*

The Acting President: I congratulate Malta, which has been elected a member of the Economic and Social Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in this election.

This concludes our consideration of subitem (b) of agenda item 15.

Agenda item 18

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Draft decision (A/55/L.4)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Papua New Guinea, Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, to introduce draft decision A/55/L.4.

Mr. Donigi (Papua New Guinea), Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples: It is an honour for me to introduce the draft decision on the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, contained in document A/55/L.4.

The effect of the draft decision would be that a special plenary meeting would be convened during the fifty-fifth session in observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration. It is hoped that at that special plenary meeting there will be statements by the Chairman of the Special Committee and the chairpersons of the five regional groups to mark the occasion. That should not take too much time.

I therefore commend the draft decision to the Assembly and urge members to adopt it by acclamation.

The Acting President: There are no further speakers on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft decision A/55/L.4, entitled "Observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples". May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt the draft decision?

Draft decision A/55/L.4 was adopted.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the date for the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples will be announced at a later date.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 18.

Agenda item 45

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Draft resolution (A/55/L.31)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.31.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): On behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.31, I have the privilege to introduce that draft resolution, on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have the honour also to add the following sponsors not listed on the document: Bulgaria, Denmark, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Luxembourg, Morocco, Oman and Senegal.

I will be very brief because the draft resolution has enjoyed wide support in its development. We would like to thank all for their contributions and for the constructive manner in which our dialogue was conducted. Because of those things, we anticipate consensus adoption.

This seems a far cry from some of the past debates on this item; it would appear that we have come full circle. Unfortunately, too many of the old issues still remain outstanding, from the arrest of indicted war criminals and the proper functioning of institutions to the return of refugees and displaced persons and economic rejuvenation. We have again re-emphasized those issues in the draft resolution before the Assembly.

What is new in the text, thank God, is more positive, and that is primarily the democratic change in the region. This will, in the longer term, have a most favourable impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina and discourage the forces of disintegration within and outside Bosnia, which still unfortunately remain.

It is also clear that Bosnia and Herzegovina must take greater charge of its own future and that the future lies in Bosnia and Herzegovina being accepted as an equal partner in the Euro-Atlantic family, as well as in continuing to develop its unique relationships and roles throughout the world. For this reason, we are most proud and pleased to highlight Bosnia and Herzegovina's contributions, including those to peacekeeping. Also, as a consequence of the Srebrenica report — and others, I might add — asked for by this

General Assembly, we have helped initiate a constructive re-evaluation of peace-building, peacekeeping and peace-making challenges to the United Nations, through the Brahimi report.

What probably remains as the main challenge in the next year is to review the efficacy of the current international efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These contributions are most necessary still. However, they should be rationalized and made more efficient, and Bosnians must be treated more as partners. Investment should replace aid. Consultation should supersede dictate. The longer-term sociological and psychological effects of the current situation must be taken into consideration. And more elections with certain desired changes cannot substitute for the gradual process of truly helping establish the environment for progressive economic, democratic and political development.

I would like to add that the Arabic draft is not entirely in line with the original text, and therefore adoption of the draft resolution may be delayed. We will be informed as to how quickly it can be brought into line and the draft resolution can be formally adopted.

Mr. Walker (United States of America): The United States is pleased to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/55/L.31, on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is an especially propitious time to consider the progress that has been achieved and to review the tasks that remain so that Dayton's dream of a democratic, tolerant and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina can be fully realized.

It has now been five years since the signing of the Dayton Accords. The three original signers of that historic agreement are no longer in power: one has died; one has been overthrown in a peaceful revolution; and the other has retired from the Presidency. New democratic leaders have emerged in Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, changing the regional dynamic and opening the door to more progress on refugee returns, succession issues, war crimes and other complicated matters.

As the draft resolution makes clear, there has been slow but steady progress in a number of areas. Refugee returns to minority areas are more than one-and-one-half times greater than last year. Privatization of the economy has begun. There has been some limited reduction in the size of the militaries, and a Bosnian multi-ethnic United Nations civilian police

contingent is serving in East Timor. But real progress in addressing these and other problems will not be made until more is done to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's central political structures. Overlapping authorities and jurisdictions have complicated even the simplest governing decisions and allowed rejectionists, separatists and criminals to hold up progress, even when the people are yearning for reform.

A perfect example of this is the slow progress we have seen in implementing the New York Declaration. One year ago tomorrow, in a historic meeting with the Security Council, the three Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina committed themselves to a series of measures designed to strengthen the central Government. Unfortunately, only part of that Declaration has been fulfilled. Too much of it, including a unified passport and a State Border Service, had to be imposed by the High Representative after hard-line Serb Democratic Party (SDS) deputies opposed these measures. We applaud the High Representative for taking resolute action and using the full authority of his office in this case. We will continue to encourage him to deal with obstructionists in a similarly resolute manner.

Progress in strengthening institutions and ensuring that extremists and obstructionists are not allowed to block Dayton's implementation would help resolve continuing problems in several areas which have been addressed in this draft resolution. More transparency and accountability would help address the problem of corruption and clear the way for progress in privatization and economic reform. Implementation of needed property legislation and removal of local criminal leaders would help accelerate refugee returns. Strengthening freedom of the press would help curtail and expose abuses. And the apprehension of war criminals still at large would help deliver justice and bring a degree of closure to all those who are suffering because of past war crimes. The United States continues to believe that there will be no lasting peace in the Balkans until all of the outstanding indictees of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia are brought to justice.

Last Saturday the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in their fourth democratic elections since the signing of the Dayton Accords five years ago. The preliminary results continue to show a trend toward greater political pluralism. We hope that the new leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina will

commit themselves to addressing the difficult issues that are the focus of this draft resolution and strive to build a multi-ethnic State based on freedom and tolerance.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): There could hardly be a more appropriate time to discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina than today. On the one hand, we are only a few days away from the fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the Dayton Accords, an agreement that, after years of bitter fighting, brought peace to the country and created a political and legal framework for its future. On the other hand, very important elections in that country have just been concluded and we await the final outcome.

Much has been done in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but more still needs to be accomplished. I shall not praise the positive developments and achievements, which certainly exist. Rather, I would like to use this opportunity to point out what needs to be done if we want to have Bosnia and Herzegovina functioning without the visible presence and influence of the international community. At least three factors are crucial here: the arrest and trial of all indicted war criminals, the return of refugees and displaced persons and economic revitalization.

We should all be perfectly aware that the Dayton Accords consist of a set of conditions that are highly interdependent and interrelated. Without all of them being fully implemented, the goal of achieving a self-sustainable, democratic and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be accomplished. That is not yet the case. While in certain areas positive developments are visible — such as the development of State institutions — in many they are not. The most acknowledged problem is definitely the lack of minority returns to all areas, and especially to Republika Srpska.

The new Croatian Administration, soon after winning the election, took many significant steps to speed up the process of the return of its citizens of Serbian origin. One of those steps included the signing of a bilateral agreement with the Republika Srpska related to the two-way return of refugees. Croatia respected and implemented the agreement, while the Government of Republika Srpska has not. Croatia will continue to create conditions for the return of all its citizens, but will also insist on the return of Croats to their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We strongly believe that Dayton has to be fully implemented by all parties. In this regard, bringing to justice those indicted for war crimes will not only serve the noble purpose of making a moral and just remedy, but will also meet practical ends. Croatia agrees with those who recognize the link between the process of minority returns and the fact that the most notorious war crime perpetrators are still at large. Only a few weeks ago one Bosnian newspaper published a letter sent by Radovan Karadzic to some Republika Srpska officials, giving them clear instructions on what to do and how to proceed on a set of specific issues.

The Republic of Croatia therefore welcomes the report on the war criminals in Republika Srpska prepared by the International Crisis Group and hopes that The Hague Tribunal and other relevant international actors have taken note of its findings. Bosnia and Herzegovina will never achieve the rule of law and interethnic reconciliation until major war criminals appear before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia or locally authorized courts.

On the issue of reconciliation, we commend the initiative taken by the High Representative to acquire land in the municipality of Srebrenica and to make it the final resting place of the victims of the massacre that took place there in 1995.

At the beginning of this statement I mentioned the elections. One could easily say that this is the year of elections in the region, a region which has Bosnia positioned at its centre. It all started with January elections in my country, followed by elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, then in Kosovo, and the latest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These processes brought about a significant change in political elites, who now include people with fresh ideas and energy to start something new and positive.

On the part of Croatia, a new and constructive approach towards Bosnia and Herzegovina has been clearly evident. The Croatian President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have each visited Sarajevo on different occasions and reassured the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina that Croatia fully respects Bosnia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nevertheless, Croatia will continue to be of assistance to Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in a transparent manner acceptable to both countries.

We support the recent decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and firmly believe that the equality and sovereignty of all constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina has to become the norm and practice throughout the territory of the State. This is primarily important for the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, given that they are the smallest constituent nation. Simply put, the main source of security in the minds of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina is as follows: for the Bosniacs, their numbers; for the Serbs, their entity; whereas for the Croats it can only be their parity.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is another neighbour of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a party to the Dayton Accords. We welcome the political change in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its rapid integration into international organizations like the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but we would encourage our Yugoslav neighbours to persist in their attempt to establish good-neighbourly relations and to give input into stabilizing the region. First and foremost, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign State and establish diplomatic relations with it without preconditions, as it agreed to do in Dayton five years ago. Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's acceptance of the principle of the equality of all five successor States, reaffirmed in this year's draft resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina, represents important confirmation of the existing borders between the republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Finally, I would like to speak about the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As we have noted, the political environment in the region has changed and has become conducive to the further stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While this is not enough, it is promising. The results of the elections should be implemented and the rhetoric should be toned down. For Bosnia and Herzegovina it is very important to swiftly join the Council of Europe and to continue on the path towards democratization, development, the rule of law and the protection of human rights, as well as further integration into the political and economic mainstream of Europe. This integration, as with the integration of any other State, should be based upon individual merits and achievements, as set out in the draft resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Handling affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina always requires caution. There are still obstacles, but the desired objective is clear and worthy of effort and international support: Bosnia and Herzegovina as a democratic and prosperous State and a country of three constituent nations and equal citizens.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): In a few days we will observe the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, which was done in Paris. Bosnia and Herzegovina has now emerged as a sovereign State, with internationally agreed borders. The people in Bosnia have had to work hard during the last five years to restore their war-ravaged State to normalcy. Not many of their efforts have been rewarded with success, but some notable progress has been achieved. A lot, however, still remains to be done.

The Dayton Peace Agreement is the most practical basis for peace objectives and the return to normalcy to be pursued. There is uneasiness over the slow implementation of the Peace Agreement. There is a long list of deadlines that have not been met, and there are promises that are yet to be fulfilled. Much of this has been attributed to the leadership's lack of commitment. Unfortunately, the leaders' party goals and their nationalist agendas have been given priority over the well-being of citizens, and the principal State institutions are still dominated by ethnic rather than State interests. The political climate that prevailed in the region for so long is often considered a chief obstacle. With a change in the political atmosphere, we are cautiously optimistic that the implementation process will receive a boost and that a much faster pace of progress will be attainable.

There are a number of priorities that must be vigorously pursued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We outline these in right earnest and with a genuine motivation for the betterment of the people of a country with which Bangladesh has great friendship.

First, economic reform must be promoted and conditions for self-sustaining economic growth created. Bosnia and Herzegovina must move away from the legacies of the past and make the transition to a dynamic civil society and a market-driven, vibrant economy. The need for continued support by the partners of the peace implementation process is vital. This will set the stage for success, despite the hurdles that have been erected by the obstructionist political forces.

Secondly, there is a need to consolidate institutions and to ensure that they function effectively and properly. Smoothly functioning institutions are critical for long-term stability and prosperity.

Thirdly, Bosnia has entered a stage of the peace process in which donor support is declining significantly and rapidly. The increasingly scant flow of resources from the international community should now be directed towards building the necessary institutional framework to allow for private investment, both domestic and foreign. The donor countries and agencies should ensure that the process is not abandoned midway, before it is firmly set on course towards a self-sustaining economy.

Fourthly, the international community should continue to support the establishment of the essential prerequisites for economic growth — modern legislation, deregulation, a viable banking system, transparent privatization and investment protection, making the rule of law a reality. Some progress has already been achieved; there is more to come.

Fifthly, attention should be directed in particular at capacity-building: modernizing the judiciary with strong and independent courts; training police and border-service personnel; supporting key legislation projects; and building a professional merit-based civil service, among other measures.

Finally, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons remains a priority. The latest figures from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees show that by the end of August 2000 about 30,000 minority returns were registered. The figures will be much higher when non-registered returns are taken into account. The most important thing is that these returns have taken place in or near the towns of Srebrenica and Foca — towns that are synonymous with massacre and destruction. The tough implementation of the property law must be credited for this. However, a lot more needs to be done to restore the confidence of refugees and internally displaced persons so that they return to their pre-war homes.

Economic reform, the return of displaced persons and refugees and the development of common institutions remain the priorities for Bosnia and Herzegovina. These are the areas identified by the High Representative for the implementation of the peace process. Although it has moved at a slow pace, Bosnia

and Herzegovina has come a long way over the past five years in attaining these goals. We need to appreciate the fact that, with the legacies of the past haunting the present, and with the bitter memories of protracted and devastating war and massacre at the back of the mind, it is not easy to be fully ready for the prompt restoration of well-functioning statehood. We applaud the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for their continued efforts to build a well-functioning sovereign State, despite these difficulties. We are fully cognizant of the many obstacles standing in their way. That is why the world should stand by and continue to provide necessary support, assistance and encouragement, rather than being impatient at the perceived slowness of progress in that country.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries, Cyprus and Malta, as well as Norway, align themselves with this statement.

I should like first of all to commend the work of the international community's High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement. For almost one and a half years, Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch has been discharging his mandate with energy and tenacity. He has spared no effort in promoting peace, reconciliation and economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He can rest assured of the full support of the European Union in accomplishing this long-term task that has been entrusted to him.

I should also like to pay tribute to the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the International Police Task Force, the Stabilization Force, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the non-governmental organizations, which have been working day after day, each in its own field, to reconstruct a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina that is closely tied to Europe.

Five years after the signing of the Dayton Agreements, Bosnia and Herzegovina, like the rest of the region, has made considerable progress. The reconstruction of the country is under way, with significant achievements being made. People belonging to minority groups are returning to their homes in increasing numbers. Political pluralism, freedom and

security are developing, as was shown by the fact that the general elections of 11 November took place in favourable conditions. These developments confirm that the course set by the Peace Agreements was the right one and that there is no alternative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the full implementation of their provisions. On 15 November 1999, in the New York Declaration, the Joint Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina reaffirmed its attachment to the implementation of the Agreements.

The results, however, have not yet lived up to the expectations, in particular because obstructionism persists. Certain policies and practices based on clan or ethnic considerations prevent the population from benefiting fully from the advantages offered by the Agreements. The Peace Implementation Council, which met in Brussels on 23 and 24 May, therefore defined the areas for which change is a priority: institution-building, economic reform and the return of refugees.

With regard to institution-building, we note that progress has been slow. Greater commitment on the part of the Bosnian leadership to the general interest, particularly at the level of the common institutions, is required. We must hope that the political leaders elected on 11 November will work in this direction. Such progress would help to deepen the process through which Bosnians themselves take ownership of their common future. We hope that this will soon be the case.

The High Representative has been called upon to use his powers in a tactful and diplomatic way, when he considers it necessary, in order to accelerate the implementation of the Peace Agreements. The most recent example of this occurred on 25 October, when a single passport was created for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, in accordance with his mandate, Mr. Wolfgang Petritsch had to dismiss some 20 Bosnian leaders who had impeded the implementation of the Dayton Agreements.

For its part, on 1 July, the constitutional court in Bosnia and Herzegovina handed down a decision that I must commend, in the case relating to the constituent peoples. By reaffirming in constitutional terms that none of the three peoples — Serbs, Croats or Bosniacs — can be discriminated against in the territory as a whole or any part thereof, the court has laid a stone in the building of the State of Bosnia and

Herzegovina. That decision should now be implemented.

Turning to the economy, reform must be ~~enhanced~~, as the Peace Implementation Council has emphasized. The difficult economic situation requires this type of progress. The restrictive framework created by certain regulations must be relaxed. The control of political parties over commercial and financial activities must be reduced. Corruption must be fought. Particular efforts are required in the area of privatization projects, which should be carried out quickly and with the necessary transparency. Furthermore, the adoption by the two entities of new legislation concerning pensions should not be postponed any longer.

As regards the return of refugees, the latest report of the High Representative has given us reason to hope. Obstacles in the area of security are receding, but an improvement in the economic situation will be required in order to promote lasting returns.

The accelerating democratic changes in South-Eastern Europe will have a positive impact on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Progress has already been noted as a result of the Croatian elections of January this year. President Kostunica's recent visit to Sarajevo has opened the way to new prospects of normalization throughout the region. The European Union encourages and strongly supports this process. Its commitment to promote peace and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been considerable. The European Union is the principal troop contributor, the main donor and the main supplier of technical assistance. I should like also to recall the active role of the Union in the signing on 12 July of the Mostar document, whose implementation will contribute to putting an end to division in that city.

In regional terms, the Union promotes cooperation projects, supports economic integration and encourages stronger ties with Europe in the context of the Stability Pact.

On 24 November, the Union will reaffirm its political commitment at the Zagreb Summit, which will bring together for the first time the countries of the European Union and those of the western Balkans.

The flourishing of democracy, reconciliation and the development of trust and cooperation among all the

countries of the region will create new prospects for a phased rapprochement with the European Union.

Mr. Bohayevskiy (Ukraine): Five years ago, when the Dayton/Paris Peace Accords were signed, many of us cherished the hope that domestic peace and stability would very soon prevail in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The achievement of this goal has taken longer than, and not been as easy as, we initially anticipated. However, we have every reason to acknowledge that the country has been moving in that direction and has made substantial progress, which, to a great extent, has been made possible by the significant amount of assistance provided by the international community, including the United Nations.

Still, a lot remains to be done to ensure the full realization of the goals that have been set. We have to remember that Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced the worst kind of destruction in the war, which took so many lives and forced many people to leave their homes. Despite the undeniably positive changes in this country, many of the scars inflicted by the war remain.

Just two months ago, in the statement he made from this rostrum, Mr. Jadranko Prlić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, confirmed the commitment of his country and of its authorities to continue with efforts to achieve peace and stabilization, to root out all causes of intolerance and to eradicate everything that in the recent past has poisoned relations with neighbouring countries.

Here we can also see positive signs. Since the Foreign Minister spoke in the Assembly, we have also witnessed very encouraging changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose people voted on 24 September last in favour of democracy. In this respect, the new situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has created a good basis for further reconciliation between and among the former Yugoslav republics and throughout the whole region.

We must therefore continue to support, at both the national and international levels, this very important positive development, as it can bring us closer to achieving the goal of establishing general peace and stability in the Balkans.

The United Nations must continue to lend its support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, because that country still needs an international presence and

assistance in eliminating the consequences of war and in preparing itself for self-sustained development. There is no alternative if we want to help that country take on a larger share of responsibility as a United Nations Member State and as a country that today is striving to bring about a truly democratic society and a better life for its people.

Last Sunday, 12 November, general elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the nation, that day was yet another test of its aspirations for democratic change. The results of those elections will show whether they have met our highest expectations. Let us hope that they will not be assessed as a lost opportunity, but rather become a further step towards ending the politics of fear and division in the country.

In conclusion, I wish to convey our message of encouragement to the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina who are here today. On behalf of our delegation, I want to assure them that Ukraine welcomes all of the positive developments taking place in their country today. Ukraine is ready to cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina in all areas of mutual interest. This interest was recently confirmed during a visit to Sarajevo by a delegation of Ukrainian experts in the area of transportation. There are many other areas in which our two countries could benefit from their cooperation.

We are the United Nations, and, as Member States of this international Organization, we should not only present and promote our national interests, but also help each other in the realization of our domestic priorities and goals. United, we will be more confident and stronger. We believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina will be a test case in this respect.

In conclusion, I should like to state that Ukraine will support any action that will facilitate further democratic changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): The international community has made a long-term commitment to the achievement of just and durable peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nearly five years after its signing, the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina — the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement — continues to be implemented with the sustained support and active engagement of the international community.

The Malaysian delegation is gratified that there has indeed been substantial progress in the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The presence of the multinational Stabilization Force (SFOR) has significantly contributed to providing a secure environment whereby the Bosnian people in most parts of the country have begun to experience security and relative normalcy. The Office of the High Representative continues to undertake important efforts and initiatives to establish and strengthen the Bosnian common institutions, as well as to ensure their effective functioning in accordance with the Peace Agreement. Meanwhile, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the International Police Task Force, is playing a major role in the restructuring and reform of the Bosnian police forces and judiciary. All these efforts, including those by other international organizations that are actively engaged in the Bosnian peace process, deserve our commendation.

The success of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina still depends very much at this stage on the continuing and active involvement of the international community. Despite the clear achievements that have been made so far, much remains to be done to consolidate peace and to build Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent, unified, multi-ethnic and multicultural State within its internationally recognized borders. The remaining critical tasks of the international community must be accomplished so that peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be irreversible, and so that the country will emerge out of the current protective care of the international community.

My delegation recalls that, following the initiative of the High Representative, the ministerial meeting of the Peace Implementation Council — which was held in Brussels last May, and in which Malaysia participated — set three key strategic targets for advancing the Bosnian peace process: strengthening the State institutions, comprehensive economic reform and the accelerated return of refugees and displaced persons.

Malaysia supported and endorsed this three-pronged strategy, just as we did the concept of ownership espoused by the High Representative, and the New York Declaration adopted by the Bosnian Joint Presidency exactly one year ago. We believe that all these efforts provide a clear framework within which

the international community and the leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina should work together to bring about further progress in the peace process.

It is indeed encouraging that some progress has been made in those key strategic areas, including the recent re-establishment of the Council of Ministers and the appointment of its Chair. There has also been an increase in so-called minority returns, which are now more than double the number of such returns during the same period last year. Further determined efforts are necessary to promote the return process, which is crucial for lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Existing political and administrative obstructions to the return process must be overcome effectively. Equally important is the fostering of economic, educational and labour-market opportunities for returnees. We support the ongoing work of the High Representative to ensure the full and vigorous implementation of the package of property legislation, in order to further increase the rate of return.

Meanwhile, economic reform is still lagging very far behind. Further strenuous efforts on the part of the Bosnian leadership are therefore pivotal for progress to be made in this area.

At the same time, continued emphasis on reconciliation should remain one of the most important priorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The consequences of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in the country must be reversed, and justice must be done, and done quickly. In this regard, my delegation wishes to underline once again the particular importance of the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which the international community must continue to strongly support. The early arrest and prosecution of all indicted war criminals, especially the likes of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, will not only serve to mete out justice, but also contribute towards accomplishing the long-term goal of national reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

My delegation commends the Bosnians and the international community for the successful holding of national elections last Saturday, 11 November 2000. That the elections were held in a free and fair manner is a strong tribute to the international community and to the Bosnian people themselves. We await the final and official outcome of the elections. Malaysia strongly calls upon the leaders who are elected to work

together among themselves and with the international community to strengthen the political, economic and social foundations for reintegration and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina — a paramount responsibility envisaged in the Peace Agreement. At this point, however, we cannot but express our serious concern over the illegal referendum that was organized by the Croatian Democratic Union. That referendum clearly goes against the very spirit and intent of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

It is our earnest hope that the recent developments in the region will augur well for a speedier implementation of the Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We call on all Bosnia's neighbours to support and cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina in realizing the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

For its part, Malaysia is proud to have been associated with the efforts to rebuild peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We have contributed funds from the Government and the Malaysian public for economic rehabilitation and infrastructure reconstruction in Bosnia. Under its Technical Cooperation Programme, Malaysia is also making available training and other facilities, as well as sharing our experiences in the field of socio-economic development and in the successful implementation of privatization in Malaysia. We will continue to participate in the International Police Task Force and the Peace Implementation Council, as well as in the work carried out by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): Being also a Balkan country, Turkey has always been directly involved in the quest to create a peaceful and stable Balkans that is poised to move towards prosperity in security, and has made incessant efforts to that end. With this aim, we have always tried to foster friendly relations and enlightened cooperation with all the countries in the region.

Given our strong bonds, stemming from a common history that time further enriches, Bosnia and Herzegovina has traditionally ranked as a priority for our foreign policy. We therefore regarded the re-establishment of the multi-ethnic and multicultural status of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the preservation of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized

borders, as of paramount importance for securing peace and stability in the Balkans, and hence in the continent.

The developments that have taken place during the past year — from the adoption of the New York Declaration exactly a year ago to the recent elections — testify to the accuracy of the key strategic targets set by the Peace Implementation Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely, the consolidation of State institutions, economic reform and the return of refugees and displaced persons.

As a member of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council, Turkey strongly believes that bringing about durable solutions depends on the achievement of these clear targets. The way to reach these targets is through the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords. However, while not playing down the many accomplishments in the implementation of the civilian aspect of the Dayton Peace Accords, I should also add that much remains to be done in this respect.

Meanwhile, mutual confidence among the Bosniacs, the Croats and the Serbs remains the key for achieving lasting peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a corollary, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community should take advantage of each and every opportunity to advance the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords.

In this connection, we believe that the aftermath of the recent general elections, completed in due order thanks to the common sense of the people of Bosnia and the commendable efforts of High Representative Mr. Petritsch, as well as those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission, offers such an opportunity.

It is now the duty of all leaders representing their people at the cantonal, entity and state levels to work hard for the political stability and economic development of the country, at the same time resisting, hand in hand with the people, any attempt by any group or circle aiming to derail the path to normalcy. We firmly believe that the people of Bosnia will maintain a firm hold on this challenge. We hope that the governing bodies will be established without delay so that the essential work toward structural reforms can start as soon as possible.

Among the many urgent issues here, I should highlight the need for the passing of new electoral legislation to pave the way for Bosnia and Herzegovina's admission into the Council of Europe.

Last, but not least, I would be remiss if I did not stress the ongoing need to have the international community firmly involved in the developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We cannot withhold such support from the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina while their country moves through a crucial stage on its way to becoming a full member of the European family of nations.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Over a whole decade, Egypt has been closely observing with grave concern the deterioration of the situation in the territories of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the eruption of racial conflicts and aggression perpetrated by one group against another. We have also followed the failure of the international community and the United Nations to immediately put an end to acts of violence and aggression and to halt the spread of ethnic cleansing. We all know now what happened in Srebrenica and the failure of the international community and the international Organization to protect and safeguard the Bosnians. This has led to similar failures in African regions. It also led to a comprehensive and integrated review of peacekeeping operations and of United Nations policies.

Today the General Assembly is discussing the issue of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Things have greatly improved through the changes that Yugoslavia has witnessed recently, and through the readmission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations on an equal footing with the other four successor States of former Yugoslavia.

The Egyptian position vis-à-vis the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on a number of unchanging elements reaffirmed in the Dayton Peace Accords. These are as follows: first, the importance of respecting the sovereignty and independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its territorial integrity as a single State, made up of two multi-racial entities; secondly, the importance of respect for human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the right of refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homeland in peace; and thirdly, the importance of trying those who are charged with perpetrating war crimes in Bosnia. These are considered an inherent part of the

successful implementation of the peace accords. In addition, all parties concerned are urged to fully cooperate with the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, established by the Security Council for this noble purpose.

In view of the unchanging Egyptian position, and in order to find out how the Peace Accords have been implemented so far, we are satisfied that the voices expressing separatism or scepticism about Bosnia's unity and independence have decreased. We are also pleased that the activation of institutions reflects the importance of this unity and of the principle of sovereignty at the international level. But this does not mean that we should be complacent. We must continue to reaffirm and support this element and its institutional mechanisms as a central part of the Peace Accords, which will not be achieved unless there is full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as one unified multi-racial country.

Egypt also welcomes the breakthroughs made in the implementation of the Peace Agreement signed in Paris on 14 December 1995. These breakthroughs followed efforts made to promote reconstruction and improve the security situation, as well as the efforts of local councils in cooperation with the United Nations mission to develop joint institutions that would guarantee Bosnia and Herzegovina's functioning as a unified and modern democratic State.

Egypt has supported the United Nations efforts aimed at supporting the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the United Nations International Police Task Force, sent there in order to observe and safeguard human rights and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Here we are honoured to point out that Egypt was part of the International Police Task Force and provided a number of efficient officers.

It is quite clear that there is still a lot to be done before we feel content with the implementation of this important component of the Peace Accords. The rate of refugees returning to their homeland is still lower than our expectations. Also, the provision of security and safety to those refugees and internally displaced persons is still below the required level to convince

them to return voluntarily to their homeland, particularly in minority areas.

Egypt believes in the importance of totally implementing the Dayton Peace Accords so that everybody fully cooperates with the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. Those two important elements are part and parcel of bringing about a stable and just peace for the peoples of the region.

For our part, we will continue to provide support and assistance to the people and Government of Bosnia in all areas.

Finally, on the basis of its unswerving position of supporting reconstruction and consolidation with the objective of returning matters to their original situation, Egypt has supported the draft resolution before the Assembly today contained in document A/55/L.31.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In exactly one month, the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina will be commemorated. The Russian Federation, as an active participant in the Bosnian settlement at all its stages, welcomes the progress achieved to date in implementing this Agreement. Its signing has allowed for diverse, sometimes contradictory, interests of the three Bosnian peoples and neighbouring States to be taken into account, especially Yugoslavia and Croatia, and to lay the foundation for Bosnian statehood on the basis of two entities with equal rights and three constituent peoples.

The Agreements reached in 1995 have lost none of their importance today.

Moreover, in spite of the generally stable situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is too soon for the world community to be complacent. We still need to make the process of the Bosnian settlement permanent and irreversible and to strengthen multi-ethnic statehood in observance of the rights of all the peoples of that country. The Russian Federation still feels that this process should be implemented in strict conformity with the Peace Agreement, the resolutions of the Security Council and other international documents on a settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any arbitrary interpretation of this mandate on the part of the international organizations is inadmissible. A revision of Dayton would inevitably destroy the balance of interests and be fraught with new tensions,

not only within Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also beyond its borders.

The lengthy experience of international efforts to implement the Peace Agreement proves that the Bosnians themselves and their political leaders must assume particular responsibility for furthering the peace process and for the destiny of their own country. All parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to demonstrate practical political will strictly to implement the Dayton provisions and to achieve genuine multi-ethnic reconciliation and the effective post-conflict reconstruction of the country. We are satisfied that the leading political forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina are demonstrating a growing understanding of these problems, which was the specific purpose of the New York Declaration of the Joint Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is high time to put it into practice.

We feel that priority should be given to overcoming all the remaining difficulties as soon as possible, with concern for the appropriate level of cooperation of both ethnic entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, not only in all Bosnian state organs, but also with the leading international bodies in the country, especially the High Representative, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Mission as a whole. The activation of such interaction will allow us to achieve a breakthrough on unresolved issues. We hope that this will be helped by the results of the elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 11 November. In particular, we need to see the rapid adoption of electoral laws; the ongoing reorganization of the Bosnian police on a multi-ethnic basis; reform of the judicial system; the creation of a modern market economy; a campaign against corruption and organized crime; and a solution to the problem of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

We welcome the commitment made by the Bosnian leadership, expressed in the New York Declaration, to the task of strengthening military cooperation between forces, including the creation of a joint subdivision for United Nations peace-building operations. Furthermore, we feel it counterproductive artificially to force the issue of a single political defence policy, primarily in the creation of a single army. Such action can only disturb the fragile balance of political stability in the mutual relations between the entities.

We also feel that the Final Arbitration Award on the Breko District should be implemented so as to avoid raising tensions and to stabilize the situation in the region as much as possible, in conformity with the Peace Agreement, by finding solutions to remaining issues that are acceptable to all parties.

As to the work in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, we wish once again to emphasize the importance of separating this activity from current political circumstances and of bringing it into strict conformity with the Statute of the Tribunal and the decisions of the Security Council. It is time to end the practice of hunting down indictees on the basis of so-called sealed indictments issued by the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which is not within the Force's mandate of stabilizing Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Russian Federation feels that the draft resolution under consideration today is generally aimed towards the achievement of a number of Dayton provisions, total inter-ethnic reconciliation and the effective post-conflict reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a democratic European State. We are convinced that recent political developments in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will have a positive impact on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the Republika Srpska. Attesting to this is the statement made by Yugoslav President Kostunica during his visit to Sarajevo concerning his readiness to establish diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and his commitment to supporting the Dayton Peace Agreement.

For its part, the Russian Federation will make a constructive contribution to finding a solution to the pending issues on the agenda of the Bosnian settlement and to the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single, democratic, multi-ethnic and prosperous State.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): Five years have passed since the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It cannot be repeated and recalled often enough that the Peace Agreement ended the most brutal and devastating armed conflict in Europe since the Second World War. The Peace Agreement in all its aspects and phases created a framework for life in peace and laid

the foundation of a new constitutional arrangement for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It has also been a year since the historic visit of the members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to New York and their participation in a meeting of the Security Council. The New York Declaration adopted on that occasion has reconfirmed the commitment of the Presidency to the key tasks in the implementation of peace.

The General Assembly's present consideration of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is marked by several encouraging events in that country's neighbourhood.

First, following the elections in Croatia almost a year ago and the changes in its policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relations between the two countries have been normalized and improved significantly. Croatia has, through its actions, reconfirmed its respect for the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Secondly, the recent change of regime in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, followed by the first visit of the Yugoslav President to the Bosnian capital, encourages hope for a change of policy of that country towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. That change would considerably influence the speed of the implementation of the Peace Agreement by the Bosnians themselves.

The unconditional establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries is a priority and probably a starting point. The early conclusion of the agreement on special parallel relations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Republika Srpska is of prime importance as well. It would give Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina the needed confidence and guarantees that were lacking during the years when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was isolated from the international community. As a consequence, both agreements should strengthen inter-ethnic and inter-ethnic integration within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A third encouraging circumstance is that the establishment of democratic authorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has enabled the integration of that country into the international community and into the region. Hence, conditions have finally been set for the much-needed peace, stability, reconciliation and reconstruction of the region as a whole. In this context, Slovenia supports the convening of the upcoming

Zagreb summit of the countries of the region and the European Union.

We would refrain from commenting on the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina since official results have not been announced yet. However, regardless of who will form the future Governments, they should be led by the mandate of the people to implement the Peace Agreement and to speed up democratization and economic recovery. They should lead the country away from the hatreds, poverty and isolation of the past and towards a better life and a common future in the European structures. These are ideals that we believe people in Bosnia and Herzegovina voted for.

The post-conflict stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a process — slow but continuing. Several essential elements of the Peace Agreement remain to be fulfilled. We are convinced that the integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European structures, starting with the Council of Europe, would significantly strengthen this process. We also commend and support fully the High Representative in his efforts to pursue three strategic priorities to help Bosnian citizens achieve this Europeanization of the country: comprehensive economic reform, accelerated refugee return and the strengthening of the State institutions.

The return of refugees remains one of the central issues for the normalization of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We note that the number of minority returns almost doubled this year. However, there are still hundreds of thousands of people who remain either displaced or refugees. Our optimism has to be realistic, especially since the major breakthrough that the international community has been expecting for the past few years has not yet happened. And time is not working in favour of the return. For these reasons, the right to return must remain one of the basic human rights of the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the urgent establishment of viable conditions for return must be one of the priorities for the new Government.

There is no reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina without the completion of the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Tribunal was established to prosecute persons whose actions and policies brought the destruction to the region. It continues to be important — maybe now more than ever — that all those who committed crimes against humanity and are responsible for or

participated in the genocide be brought to justice. The international community owes this to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We commend the efforts of the Tribunal in bringing justice to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are pleased to note the willingness of the High Representative and the Stabilization Force to use their authority to enforce the provisions of the Peace Agreement, including the provisions concerning compliance with the orders of the Tribunal.

At the same time, we are concerned with the fact that the work of the Tribunal could go on for another 16 years. We expect the Security Council to speedily consider several solutions proposed by the judges of the Tribunal to shorten the time-frame for the conclusion of the Tribunal's work.

I wish also to touch upon one unresolved issue, the resolution of which would also contribute positively to the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina: that of the succession of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which ceased to exist. It is essential that a resolution of this issue be based upon respect for the principle of legal equality of all successor States, as determined by the Badinter Arbitration Commission, in order to contribute to lasting peace and stability in the region. The recent changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia promise to remove this obstacle to the normalization of relations among the successor States to the former Yugoslavia, and we are looking forward to an early conclusion of this issue within the Peace Implementation Council's working group on succession.

Demining is an area that Slovenia considers important in the normalization of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Successful demining not only will allow a more adequate return of refugees but will also help to restore economic activity in the country. This is the reason for our continuing commitment to the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance. The Trust Fund has in the past year alone successfully cleared as much as two thirds of all the territory that has been cleared of mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or 3 million square metres. The Trust Fund, as the most cost-effective and most efficient way to clear mines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has attracted until now donations from 22 Governments in the amount of \$56 million. We would like to encourage

other countries to join us in our efforts to clear Bosnia and Herzegovina of all mines.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the importance of the continued interest of the United Nations and its General Assembly in the post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that the draft resolution before us, of which Slovenia is proud to be a sponsor, will guide the action of all involved in the effort to establish just and durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina over the last year has continued to indicate that smooth and fast progress towards the implementation of the Peace Agreement still faces significant resistance. Although some important progress has been noted, such as the establishment of a new Council of Ministers and of three new ministries, it is disappointing that a lack of political will on the part of those who focus on ethnic issues threatens the effective functioning of the institutions.

Overall, the important issue of the search for self-sustaining stability in the Balkans is high on the agenda, but we are still far from the goals set in this regard. Despite slow but steady progress in the implementation of the 1995 Peace Agreement, which is the prerequisite for peace and stability in the region, there are a number of underlying challenges yet to be overcome. They include short-sighted views still maintained by certain groups, parties and ethnic divisions, as well as delays in institution-building, judicial reform and economic regeneration. Surmounting these challenges demands greater efforts on the part of the leadership and principal forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve increased democracy, tolerance and reconciliation among the different ethnic communities.

The return of refugees and displaced persons — in particular, the return of people to areas in which they are in the minority — reconciliation among different ethnic communities, minority protection, economic reforms and recovery, and freedom of movement for people, goods, services and information throughout the country are among the main outstanding issues that have to be comprehensively addressed to facilitate the establishment of viable statehood for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The return of refugees to all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a prerequisite for reconciliation in the country. Although the overall return process has been rather slow, it is encouraging to note that the recent increase in the minority returns has brought the figures to more than double the number of such return during the same period last year, and further efforts should therefore be made to promote them.

We continue to attach great importance to the role of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in bringing justice to the region. Unfortunately, despite the repeated calls of the international community, and in contravention of the Peace Agreement, some notorious indicted war criminals continue to remain free and disrupt the political affairs of the country. The continued freedom enjoyed by the leading indicted war criminals sends the wrong political message. Worse yet, it contributes to a climate of insecurity that limits refugee returns, particularly in minority areas. The arrest and prosecution of these indicted war criminals would not only serve justice, but would also contribute to accomplishing the long-term goal of national reconciliation, which alone can guarantee to Bosnia and Herzegovina the ability to free itself from the ghosts of its tragic past.

In view of this background, we hope that the recent developments in the region as a whole will be conducive to creating a new, positive momentum which could accelerate the pace of change and strengthen peace in a multi-ethnic, multicultural society in that country. We also hope that these developments will present an opportunity for progress on issues of succession and will pave the way for good-neighbourly relations and close cooperation among all Balkan countries, which is of great importance for the attainment of self-sustaining peace in the region.

Although a strong commitment of, and full cooperation from, the Bosnian leadership and the people at every level are imperative, durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina requires the full cooperation of its neighbours and the international community. Therefore, we believe that international assistance, in various forms, should continue, with a view to bringing about a self-sustaining peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.

We believe that continued commitment and serious efforts towards realizing a shared vision of

Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent, unified, multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious State within its internationally recognized borders are the only way that will lead to a durable and just peace in that country and the Balkans.

We commend the ongoing work of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the United Nations International Police Task Force (UNIPTF). We also appreciate the relentless efforts made by the High Representative and Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sarajevo in furthering the peace-seeking objectives of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the whole region.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to President Izetbegović, who resigned last October from the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is an outstanding statesman and a respected leader, who worked assiduously for the political independence and territorial integrity of his country and the well-being of his people. We consider his departure to be a great loss to the peace process in the Balkans.

Mr. Islam (Pakistan): Bosnia and Herzegovina is a unique example of a country which, after the devastation of war, is trying to take the reins of its destiny back into its own hands. A war-torn nation is now struggling not only to consolidate its nationhood, but also to integrate itself into the international community. Five years ago, at Dayton, Ohio, the leaders of that devastated country committed themselves to rebuild peace. This commitment was all the more difficult because the very fabric of their society had been ripped apart. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve our highest admiration for their determination to abandon the way of violence. Despite daunting odds, their progress down the path to peace and reconstruction has been appreciable.

Yet peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fragile. There can be no durable peace unless the ghosts of war can be laid to rest. The multi-ethnic society of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be protected from any recurrence of conflict. The basic requirement for this is an end to the deep-seated hatred that manifested itself during the brutal war and the re-establishment of mutual trust. This daunting task is made even more difficult by an absence of sincere commitment, largely on the part of the Serbian

community. Mutual accommodation and acceptance is a necessary condition without which it will not be possible to ensure reconciliation and strengthen the national institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge all parties, therefore, to make earnest and determined efforts to bring about peace for their peoples and for the sake of their children.

Faithful implementation of the Dayton Accords is central to durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, sovereign and independent State. While the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has fulfilled its obligations to a large extent, we regret that the Republika Srpska is lagging behind in certain key areas. We are particularly concerned at the lack of progress by the Serbian entity in the return of refugees and displaced persons, freedom of movement across the inter-entity boundary line, cooperation with the International Tribunal for war crimes, the establishment of common institutions, judicial and police reform, and a host of other issues.

The return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes is a vital element in the reintegration process of the fragmented multi-ethnic society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and displaced persons is essential to reverse the consequences of "ethnic cleansing" and to heal, as far as possible, the deep and festering wounds that it caused during the long years of war. We call on all the parties, especially the Republika Srpska, to cooperate with each other in this vital area of national reconstruction.

Justice is the hallmark of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as it is elsewhere. All parties must implement their solemn commitment made at Dayton to pursue and apprehend war criminals. We note with concern that most of the war criminals remain at large, mostly in the territory of the Republika Srpska and Serbia. These criminals must be surrendered to the International Tribunal so that proceedings against them can be started without any further delay. Cooperation of the authorities in the Republika Srpska and Belgrade is essential for the apprehension of those accused of genocide and crimes against humanity. Strict and unconditional adherence to international law is essential to advance the goal of reintegration. We believe that those who participated in mass murders must not go unpunished anywhere in the world, be it in Srebrenica, in Kosovo, in Rwanda or in Jammu and Kashmir.

The international community needs to commit itself to the sustained revival of Bosnia's economic and social structure, which was devastated by three years of war. An integrated and comprehensive approach to economic reform which would contribute to a homogeneous development of the economy and trade in the two entities and across the inter-entity boundary line is essential. Ways must be found to speed up the pace of economic development and reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The donor countries and the donor agencies must continue to provide financial and technical support to Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, the three communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to recognize that cooperation in this area will benefit all sides and remove many of the obstacles to lasting peace in that country. It is therefore essential that the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina make concerted efforts towards establishing a multi-ethnic society that is economically vibrant and where respect for human rights and fundamental freedom enjoys primacy.

We recall with appreciation the integrity of the Secretary-General's report on the massacre of thousands of innocent people in the United Nations "safe area" in Srebrenica. This is an important document, and we commend the efforts made to uncover the facts concerning those unforgivable crimes in Srebrenica. It is our earnest hope that the Secretary-General, the Member States and the relevant organs of the United Nations will appropriately address the disturbing revelations in the report with a view to ensuring that such inhuman acts will never be allowed to take place anywhere in the world in the future.

We have long remained committed to peace and prosperity in Bosnia. During the war, Pakistan provided one of the largest troop contingents for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a member of the Security Council at that time, we worked to bring about peace, but peace with justice. In those days of deep crisis, Pakistan extended moral, political, financial, technical and material support to the people of that country in defence of international law and morality as a sign of our solidarity with them in the hour of suffering. We continue to stand by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Our support is, as it was then, a manifestation of our conviction that no nation must be victimized because of its weakness and vulnerability, no people should be brutalized because of their ethno-

religious origins and no nation or people should be denied their inherent right to self-determination and the right to wage a legitimate struggle for freedom.

We believe in the resilience and strength of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in their ability to overcome the formidable challenges confronting them. They have come a long way and they deserve our full support in their efforts for national reconstruction. The international community must continue to provide unswerving support to a sovereign, united, multi-ethnic, multicultural and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, at peace with itself and contributing to international peace and security. In this regard, we laud the recent participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in United Nations peacekeeping efforts.

The draft resolution before this Assembly today embodies the principles and goals that must be accomplished to bring about a just and lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Pakistan is a sponsor of this draft resolution and recommends its adoption by consensus.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.31.

I would like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following

countries have become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.31: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Tunisia.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.31.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.31?

Draft resolution A/55/L.31 was adopted (resolution 55/24).

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 45.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I wish to inform members of an addition to the programme of work of the General Assembly. On Monday, 20 November 2000 in the afternoon, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the First Committee. I should like also to inform members that, as announced in today's *Journal*, the third meeting of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on agenda item 182, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", will be held on Tuesday, 21 November 2000, at 3 p.m. in Conference Room 1, to consider conference room paper A/55/CRP.1, copies of which are available in room 2925.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

62nd plenary meeting

Wednesday, 15 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 105

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (A/55/383 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/55/383, para. 121)

The President: Members will recall that at its 35th plenary meeting, on 17 October 2000, the General Assembly decided to consider agenda item 105 directly in plenary meeting for the sole purpose of taking action on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto.

The report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on the work of its first to eleventh sessions is contained in documents A/55/383 and addendum 1.

In this connection, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report contained in document A/55/383.

I give the floor to Mr. Luigi Lauriola, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to introduce the report.

Mr. Lauriola (Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime): In December 1998, the General Assembly voted to establish an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc committee for the purpose of elaborating a convention against organized crime. To complement the convention, the Assembly also directed that three additional protocols be negotiated — one on illicit trafficking in women and children, a second on illicit trafficking in firearms, and a third on the illegal trafficking in, and transporting of, migrants. In resolution 54/126, of 17 December 1999, the Assembly requested that the Ad Hoc Committee accelerate and complete its work by the year 2000 and submit the final text of the Convention and its Protocols to the Assembly for adoption prior to a high-level signing conference. In accordance with resolution 54/129 of 17 December 1999, the High-level Signing Conference is to be hosted by the Government of Italy, and is now scheduled to take place in Palermo from 12 to 15 December.

It is indeed a great privilege and an honour for me to speak before the Assembly today as the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee established by the General Assembly. As the Chairman, I am here to present the text of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, along with two additional Protocols — one on

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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illicit trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and the other on illicit trafficking in, and transporting of, migrants. These texts were intensively worked out during 11 sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee and were finalized by unanimous agreement in less than two years, from January 1999 to October 2000. That might sound like a surprisingly rapid rate of progress within a relatively short span of time, but the fact is that the seeds of that success were sown well before 1999.

The idea of preparing a United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was first formally raised at the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime, which was held in Naples on 23 November 1994. In approving the Naples Political Declaration and its Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime, the General Assembly urged States to implement them as a matter of urgency. There was then a whole series of additional initiatives that helped to the spark the international community's awareness about the need to fight transnational organized crime.

I want to underline in particular the importance of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Cairo; the Regional Ministerial Workshop, held in Buenos Aires; meetings in Palermo; the African Regional Ministerial Workshop, held in Dakar; the Regional Ministerial Workshop held in Manila; and the meetings of the Friends of the Chair held in Rome, Buenos Aires and Vienna. Of special importance was the meeting of an open-ended intergovernmental group of experts held in Warsaw, which I believe took place in February 1998. Great credit is also due to the Government of Poland, which introduced the first actual draft of the Convention. That was followed by another draft, submitted by the United States, and by a summary of proposals by various countries, prepared by the Max Planck Institute at the request of the United Nations Secretariat.

Those who have experience of multilateral conventions know that the negotiating process tends to be a long and difficult one. Governments inevitably bring to negotiations basic differences in juridical concepts and the unique features of their legal systems, not to mention the variety of political positions stemming from their domestic and foreign policy needs. That accumulated legal and political baggage must then be painfully sorted through in the quest for a

compromise. Delay on each successive issue seems to be the order of the day. In our case, the diversity of juridical language that characterized our initial efforts would have made the Tower of Babel sound like a monologue of heavenly concord and mutual understanding.

Our success in concluding negotiations in a relatively short span of time was certainly not due to the simplicity of the task, the initial clarity of the concept or an absence of political disagreement. We began in an atmosphere of skepticism and hesitation but — little by little, step by step, slowly but steadily — it was the political will of the participants to tackle transnational organized crime that began to make itself felt. Some of the ingredients of success were in place from the very outset. We had almost 125 countries participating, which sent a highly qualified cadre of delegates drawn from the ranks of Government officials as well as from academia, while non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international organizations, such as the Wassenaar Arrangement, added their experience and encouragement.

What helped make possible the participation of so many delegations were the voluntary financial contributions of several States; I should make particular reference to the United States, Japan, Poland, Austria, Norway, Italy and the Netherlands. But it was the emerging political will, driven by newspaper headlines and by public opinion, that was the catalyst that gave decisive impetus to the search for a global response to organized crime on a global level.

In the final analysis, it was that will that animated our work and that took the good faith of participating States and the talent of their representatives and forged them into an instrument able to overcome successive obstacles as they arose. Practically every delegation had something to contribute, and the ongoing pursuit of consensus put each delegation on an equal footing and brought home to each participant that he or she was a vital part of the process.

In the end, the pressure to succeed, the recognition of the international community's need for a convention and the dynamic of the negotiating process itself all became overwhelming. Countries that had been opposed even to the idea of discussing the possibility of an international instrument soon became the strongest supporters of a convention. Other

countries, such as Italy, Poland and Argentina, which were considered to be too idealistic, supported the process from the very beginning. That reminds me of what somebody has said: it is not necessary to be sure of success in order to succeed and in order to persevere.

For my own part, all I can say is that starting this process was certainly an act of courage. Continuing in the face of adversity was an act of faith. Concluding now by approving and ratifying the draft Convention would be an act of wisdom of which all those who participated in the negotiations could be proud. Indeed, all the members of the General Assembly could be proud of this achievement.

The draft Convention provides a framework and tools for better international cooperation against organized crime without borders. But what will be critical is its implementation. Now it is the turn of the General Assembly to provide the political will to put into practice the machinery of the draft Convention by adopting, signing and ratifying the three instruments before it as soon as possible. I refer not only to the draft Convention but also to the two draft protocols, on illicit trafficking in women and children, and on illicit smuggling of migrants.

For that reason, I have submitted a draft resolution recommending the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft Convention and the two draft protocols. I hope that the Assembly will accept that recommendation, and that as many members as possible will be able to participate in the signing conference, to be held at Palermo, hosted by the Italian Government.

Incidentally, as far as the draft resolution is concerned, corrections must be made to paragraphs 3 and 11 to bring them into conformity with United Nations language and practice.

I need to recall that the mandate given to the Ad Hoc Committee included also the elaboration of a draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. I regret to report that the Ad Hoc Committee was unable to complete its deliberations on such a draft protocol in time for submission to the Assembly. While we were very close to agreement, a few points — in particular marking — needed additional consideration.

Accordingly, the Ad Hoc Committee respectfully requests that it be allowed to continue its work, in conformity with resolutions 53/111, 53/114 and 54/126, so that it might have an opportunity to finalize its work in the near future. To that end, we would envisage calling a meeting early in 2001; a paragraph to that effect has been inserted in the draft resolution.

Allow me to express my sincere thanks to all the members of the 125 delegations that took part in the negotiations. I was particularly impressed by their knowledge, by their expertise and by their professionalism. They made it possible to conduct our deliberations in a positive, flexible and constructive spirit. The members of the expanded Bureau, some of whom I see here today, deserve special mention: Ecuador, France, Japan, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Slovakia, Tunisia, Venezuela and South Africa, which served as Rapporteur. And I personally am highly indebted to the Vice-Chairmen, who assisted me in the negotiation of the draft Convention — particularly Ecuador, Venezuela, Pakistan and Tunisia — and of the draft protocols — France and Poland for the draft protocol on migrants, Mexico and Slovakia for the draft protocol on illicit trafficking in persons, and Japan for the unfinished draft protocol on firearms.

Let me also convey my heartfelt thanks to the Secretary-General for the support given to our Committee through the United Nations Office at Vienna, and to the members of the Secretariat, in particular Mr. Jan van Dijk, Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde and, especially, the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Dmitri Vlassis, for their unfailing assistance. I extend my thanks also to all other staff members who served with dedication.

Looking back to where we started, my mind once again is drawn to a line from the Italian poet Dante, who wrote that "From a small spark springs a majestic flame". We have come a long way. Not so many years ago, Governments tended to ignore crime beyond their borders. The statement issued by 72 heads of State at the recent tenth Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Vienna, marked the sea-change that has occurred since. The dangers posed by organized crime to individual citizens and to the international community have rightly risen to the top of the agenda. The first steps have been taken, but we still have a long way to go. Now it is up to the Assembly to develop and recommend effective tools to provide a global response to this global scourge.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta align themselves with this statement.

The development of transnational organized crime, fostered by a context in which globalization is taking place, is a major challenge to the international community. Indeed, it is today one of the major non-military threats to the safety and security of individuals, the stability of societies, the sovereignty of States and the development and preservation of democracy. In the light of its universal mission, the United Nations is the forum best suited for devising the legislative tools to enable us together to combat this scourge.

The period of less than two years set by the General Assembly for negotiating a draft Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was exceptionally short for such a complex legal instrument of such vast scope. It was a sign of the urgency felt by Member States with respect to transnational organized crime and of their determination rapidly to acquire the tools to deal with the situation.

The European Union would like to congratulate the intergovernmental Ad Hoc Committee and its Chairman, Mr. Luigi Lauriola, for having ensured the success of this endeavour through sustained and persevering work. The European Union thanks Poland for having submitted the initial draft text of the Convention to the Ad Hoc Committee, and it would also like to express its gratitude to all the States that took part in the negotiations and displayed both the determination to arrive at an instrument that is as legally rigorous as it is effective and the spirit of compromise vital to overcoming the differences in approach which emerged during the discussions.

Finally, the Union would like to thank the Centre for International Crime Prevention, which supported the Ad Hoc Committee's work, and which, owing to the competence and commitment of its staff, greatly contributed to the conclusion of the negotiations within the time limits that had been set.

The European Union considers the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its related

Protocols to be an exemplary normative instrument. It is the first global legal instrument devised to combat transnational organized crime. In our opinion, it introduces key innovations in the legal field and in the procedures for cooperation among States parties.

As concerns the two related protocols negotiated and adopted along with the Convention, the European Union believes that these complementary instruments are vital, because they take into account, and set out specific measures for addressing, particularly serious types of organized transnational crime.

As regards the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, the European Union would like to thank the Japanese presidency of the Ad Hoc Committee for all the efforts made to conclude the negotiations. We hope that a new session will be convened as soon as possible and that all Member States will demonstrate the spirit of compromise that is necessary for achieving a consensus.

Nonetheless, the European Union considers that the completion of negotiations on the Convention and its two related protocols is an outstanding achievement. This should not, however, cause us to overlook the work that is still ahead of us. Having arrived at satisfactory texts is one thing, but it is quite another to ensure their entry into force and implementation. In this respect, we shall still have several important bridges to cross following the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft resolution approving the Convention and its two additional protocols.

The first will be the signing conference, to be held in Palermo, Italy, from 12 to 15 December 2000. The European Union thanks Italy for offering to host the conference, which will conclude a cycle that also began in Italy — to be specific, in Naples in 1994, with the adoption of the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Crime.

The European Union calls upon all Member States to sign the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto at the Palermo conference.

The second stage will be the entry into force of the Convention and of its protocols. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee want this to take place once the text has been ratified by 40 States, so that the

geographical framework for the implementation of the text encompasses from the outset more than one continent or one single region of the world. The Union considers that this legitimate concern should not, however, cause a delay in the entry into force of the Convention and its protocols. It therefore urges all Member States to ratify the Convention and its two related protocols at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, the Union attaches great importance to the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention and its protocols by all those States that will be parties to it, including in cases in which assistance is needed to bring their institutional and judicial systems up to standard. With this in mind, and in order to attain this objective, the Union encourages Member States to contribute towards the widest possible implementation of these legal instruments.

The member States of the Union, for their part, are determined to sign and ratify the Convention and its related protocols as soon as possible and to resolutely apply all of their provisions.

By approving today the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two related protocols, the General Assembly will be manifesting the international community's determination to combat one of the most serious threats it is confronting today.

Mr. Vento (Italy): I am pleased to take the floor in the General Assembly to express my Government's warm appreciation for the excellent work done in Vienna by all the delegations that participated in the intensive negotiations, which were brought to a positive conclusion with the approval of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two protocols — the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

In particular, I wish to single out the contribution made by the Ad Hoc Committee, chaired by Ambassador Luigi Lauriola.

Italy fully endorses the statement made by France in its capacity as President of the European Union and wishes to add the following considerations in a national capacity.

The Convention and the two Protocols address sensitive issues and set up a complex normative system

on matters such as criminal law, in which differences between national legislations make the drafting of international laws particularly difficult.

My country played a major role in the negotiating process that led to the finalization of the text of the Convention, whose draft was initially proposed by Poland. The process was launched in 1994 at the Naples World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime, which adopted a Political Declaration and an operational Action Plan. Significantly, it will conclude in December in Palermo, where the Italian Government is organizing a high-level political conference for the signing of the Convention and the supplementary Protocols.

As the European Union presidency noted, the successful completion of the text of the Convention and of the two Protocols in such a short period of time is clear evidence of the international community's growing awareness of the seriousness of transnational organized crime and of the need for urgent and effective international cooperation mechanisms to fight it.

Organized crime is harmful to quality of life and to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world. It jeopardizes economic development, corrupting and destabilizing social and political institutions. The adoption of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is a major step in the fight against this scourge. It is also a remarkable achievement in the promotion of justice and security, and ranks alongside the approval of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in the more recent actions of the United Nations.

Italy is particularly pleased by the specific contents of the three instruments that have been submitted to the General Assembly for adoption. The Convention does not simply lay out a general normative framework that correlates international laws on specific types of crimes. Instead, it is itself an innovative instrument that has a direct impact on the prevention and prosecution of a broad range of crimes, including all of the serious transnational crimes committed by organized crime groups.

To this end, the Convention includes not only measures to strengthen national crime-fighting systems, but also measures to foster cooperation among States. The improvement of national legislation is a prerequisite to preventing criminal groups from

growing and proliferating by taking advantage of loopholes in national systems. They are also a prerequisite to effective international cooperation.

The Convention gives prominence to the agreements reached on criminalizing behaviour that underlies the constitution and operation of criminal groups — such as criminal association, conspiracy, money laundering and corruption — as well as to provisions by which States undertake to adopt crime-prevention initiatives.

The Convention also contains significant measures on international cooperation between judicial and police authorities. The Italian Government is convinced that bilateral or regional agreements are not enough to meet the need for prompt collaboration in investigating and prosecuting transnational crimes committed by organized crime groups. Instead, we need to build a global system of norms and practices that fosters collaboration among the largest possible number of countries. We are convinced that the application of the Convention's provisions — especially those relating to mutual judicial assistance and extradition — effectively and thoroughly governs the most relevant aspects of this collaboration and will promote national police and judicial action to fight organized crime.

The two protocols support the functioning of the Convention with specific measures made necessary by the unique characteristics of transnational organized crime. Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is a particularly heinous crime. The protocol on trafficking, which pays equal attention to the repression of illegal conduct and the protection of the victims, fills in many gaps in international law and provides an effective instrument for international cooperation.

The same holds true for the protocol against the smuggling of migrants. The Italian contribution to this legal instrument has been particularly relevant, as my Government, together with the Government of Austria, proposed the initial draft.

From a law-enforcement perspective, this protocol requires States to criminalize the activity of groups that, for the sake of profit, exploit the hardship of migrants, place them in life-threatening situations, arrange for them to be smuggled into countries and illegally facilitate their stay. In addition, Italy believes that the protocol's provisions covering the

transportation of migrants over the seas should be considered of particular value, as this is one of the most dangerous forms of smuggling today.

While voicing my Government's satisfaction with the fact that it took less than two years to complete this enormous job, I express our hope that the negotiations on the protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in arms will be resumed shortly, so that a compromise on the most controversial points can be reached.

We must quickly follow up on our adoption of the Convention and its two protocols by implementing the provisions they contain. Otherwise, organized crime will seize upon our delays in enforcing such action and exploit our every weakness. Therefore the Italian Government hopes that all States will promptly sign and ratify the Convention. We appeal to Member States to come to Palermo in large numbers for the Signing Conference, and we urge them to be represented at the highest possible level.

If we wish to make the Convention and its protocols operative, it is not enough for their norms to enter into force. All States parties must take the necessary steps to adapt their legislation and their domestic institutions. Therefore Italy hopes that every necessary action can be taken at the United Nations to facilitate the implementation of these three instruments by the States parties, and Italy looks forward to the contribution that the political debate at the Palermo conference will offer to this goal.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico wishes to voice its satisfaction at the conclusion of the negotiations on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and on the protocols to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, in particular women and children, and against illegal trafficking in migrants by land, sea and air, which complement the Convention. Nevertheless, we would like to place on record our profound concern at the lack of political will on the part of some States, which prevented the conclusion of a protocol on the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

The adoption of these instruments is undoubtedly a concrete step towards the practical implementation of the commitment entered into by the heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit to intensify the struggle against transnational crime in all

its dimensions, including smuggling and illicit trafficking in human beings and money laundering.

In an increasingly interdependent world, organized criminal groups use increasingly sophisticated methods to make their activities transnational. The States cannot remain paralysed. We must have international cooperation to jointly combat transnational organized crime.

The Convention is a novel instrument, for it establishes a legal regime for the prevention of and fight against transnational organized crime, at the same times as it is broadly applicable and establishes mechanisms for international cooperation that are effective and will undoubtedly strengthen efforts in this field. The Convention and its protocols have a unified nature, but the three texts have to be examined in a differentiated manner, for they refer to aspects of criminality that have different features. Mexico successfully promoted recognition of these differences.

As far as Mexico is concerned, the essential purpose of preventing and combating the smuggling of persons, especially women and children, is to protect victims of exploitation for sexual reasons or for work. It is not only a matter of combating criminal groups. The protocol against the illicit trafficking in migrants is an instrument of international cooperation designed to prevent and combat this crime. It is not an instrument to control migration. Mexico supports the adoption of this protocol insofar as it is confined to the penal aspects of the illicit trafficking in migrants carried out by organized criminal groups. It protects the rights of the persons who are the objects of such trafficking and expressly establishes that migrants cannot be criminally prosecuted under the protocol, nor can proceedings be brought against third parties who have acted in good faith to support such migrants for humanitarian reasons or because of close family relationships.

As far as Mexico is concerned, illicit trafficking in migrants is an especially serious crime when it endangers the lives and security of the migrants.

The fight against transnational organized crime can only be effective to the extent that we suppress the manufacture and illicit trafficking in firearms. This is why we feel that the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate will not have been fully discharged until that protocol is adopted.

Mexico will continue to deploy the necessary efforts to ensure that the instrument becomes a reality at the beginning of the year 2001. As President Zedillo pointed out when the Inter-American Convention in this field was open for signing — and it is now in force — illicit trafficking in firearms, explosives and other destructive types of materials is a problem that has been affecting the security of many of our countries and the peace and quiet in our families and communities. This trade in violence promotes phenomena as serious as drug trafficking, which destroys and imposes its code of death and corruption. Organized crime commits kidnapping and violent attacks, threatens public security and commits acts of terrorism. All of this seeks to block the progress of democracy and enthrone dogmatism and intolerance.

With the adoption of the protocol, we will be taking an important step forward both in combating organized crime and in our efforts to regulate international trade in firearms. This Assembly has recognized the complementarity of activities to prevent and reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons and activities to combat the manufacture and illicit trafficking of firearms.

In order for the conference to be held in the year 2001 to benefit fully from the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, we must conclude this negotiation as soon as possible. We are committed to this goal, and we invite the States that still maintain reservations to reconsider their position and allow us to conclude this important protocol, the present version of which enjoys ample international support.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Nowadays the problem of crime has become a factor that cannot be neglected by any State that seeks to ensure the security, tranquillity and well-being of its citizens. Modern criminals long ago realized the true advantages of close international links, and they have not been slow to use them for their anti-social purposes, often keeping a few steps ahead of the forces of law and order.

In these conditions, the need to establish a single anti-crime front of States at the global level is becoming glaringly obvious. World society must create a system under which criminals will not be beyond the reach of the law in any country or be able to use their illicit proceeds. The Convention against Transnational

Organized Crime should form a reliable basis for this system. In just one and a half years, it has been possible to prepare a document to serve for decades as the fundamental instrument of international cooperation in combating crime. This is an indisputable indicator of the fact that, given the necessary will, we can achieve serious results in the anti-crime sphere in a very short time.

We regard the adoption by the current General Assembly session of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as a big success for the United Nations. In this connection, we would like to note the big contribution to the attainment of this goal made by the Chairman of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee, Luigi Lauriola, the members of the Bureau and members of the Centre for International Crime Prevention. We are glad that the Convention covers a broad range of crimes, including money laundering, corruption and membership in organized criminal groups.

It is important that the document contains detailed arrangements for the provision of reciprocal legal assistance, extradition and measures to protect witnesses and victims of crime. We are sure that these and other provisions of the Convention will enhance the quality of the work of the law enforcement agencies of our countries and cooperation between them at a qualitatively higher level. We also welcome the adoption of additional protocols to the Convention on such pressing problems as trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. We hope that work on the additional protocol on combating illicit trafficking in firearms will be successfully completed in a very short time.

No less important than the adoption of this Convention is the question of its speedy entry into force and the beginning of its effective functioning. This process will be given a vigorous start in December of this year at the high-level political conference for signing this document. We are grateful to the Government of Italy for offering to host this forum in Palermo.

In conclusion, we would like to confirm once again that the Russian Federation will continue to make maximum efforts to combat the criminal threat and promote the strengthening of cooperation among States in combating crime.

Mr. Rydzkowski (Poland): At the outset, allow me to express the satisfaction of the Polish Government on the adoption by the General Assembly, to take place shortly, of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Since Poland is a European Union associated country, it fully subscribes to the statement of the Presidency of the Union just made by the representative of France.

I would like only to make some additional remarks. As it is widely known, Poland was the country that started the practical work on the Convention in terms of its concept and implementation. Although the idea of a multilateral convention against organized crime goes back to the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime, adopted by the World Ministerial Conference in Italy in 1994, it was the Polish President, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, who presented the first draft of the future convention to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 1996.

Following this initiative, the Polish Government invited a group of international experts to Warsaw in February 1998 to start preliminary discussions on the convention. Although the efforts to elaborate an international instrument designed specifically to fight transnational organized crime had already been part of history, the Warsaw meeting marked an important breakthrough in two respects. First and foremost, the issue of drafting such a multilateral convention was no longer addressed as a "whether or not" question but became one of "how". It was also the first time that representatives of more than 50 States unanimously agreed to have an effective tool to combat transnational organized crime in its most dangerous transnational dimension. Moreover, when considering different approaches, delegations focused on identifying areas of emerging consensus.

Today, when we are approaching the fourth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on this matter, we are especially pleased that the process is over and that the General Assembly is able to adopt one of the most important international legal instruments of our time. This adoption reflects fully the conviction that no single State can successfully suppress organized crime, even within its own borders.

The new legal instrument is of a unique character because, for the first time, it delivers in a precise manner the definition of the phenomenon of transnational organized crime and defines instruments of an effective fight against uncivil society. The adoption of the convention and its two additional protocols after only three and a half years of work is a significant achievement and reflects the political will of the international community to combat the increased threat posed by organized crime. We hope that the new convention will fulfil the expectations of Governments and law enforcement authorities and become an efficient and effective tool of cooperation between States on all levels.

From the practical point of view, the adoption of a legal instrument is only a beginning. Now we are on the threshold of the next step — the implementation of the convention and its two protocols. Before us is the signing ceremony in Palermo, the difficult process of national ratification and implementation at the international and national levels. At this point, it is necessary to stress that the full implementation of the convention will be possible only when it is done on a universal basis, which means that resources will be necessary to assist those States which are not able to fight organized crime by themselves.

As one of the initiators of the work on the convention against transnational organized crime, Poland expresses the hope that the existing spirit of cooperation will be extended to the process of ratification and that we will shortly have the 40 ratifying States necessary for the convention's entry into force. We also express hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime will be able to finish its work on the third protocol, covering the problem of illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms. We are of the opinion that the convention and its three related protocols constitute a set and that, without one of them, an efficient fight against organized crime will not be possible.

Before concluding, I would like to express our appreciation to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Luigi Lauriola, and the other members of the Bureau for their dedication and hard work. Special thanks go to the Centre for International Crime Prevention, without which the conclusion of the work would not have been possible. We also thank the government of Argentina, which organized the second

meeting of the intergovernmental group of experts, and other countries which contributed to the work on the convention at different stages.

The President: The Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime has asked to take the floor again. I call on him.

Mr. Lauriola (Italy), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: I apologize for taking the floor again, but, according to procedure, I have to read out a few corrections to the text of the draft resolution.

As I have already said, there will be some correction to operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, in which the words "summary records" are to be replaced by the words "a comprehensive report".

In operative paragraph 11, we are to delete the words "and under the direction of" and to add at the end of the paragraph "in accordance with paragraph 33 of the Convention". This is just to make the draft resolution consistent with the language and the practice of the United Nations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, as orally corrected by the Committee Chairman.

I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division): Before taking action on the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, I should like to inform members that, first, in connection with operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the Assembly would request the Ad Hoc Committee to continue its work in relation to the draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts, component and ammunition, and to finalize such work as soon as possible. This request would imply the need to convene an additional session of the Ad Hoc Committee in 2001. The Secretariat estimates that the session would

last five working days and that interpretation and documentation in the six official languages would be required. These conference servicing requirements are estimated to amount to \$187,600 at full cost.

Provisions have been made in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 not only for meetings already programmed at the time of budget preparation, but also for meetings or extensions of meetings that might be authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings were consistent with the pattern of meetings of past years.

On that basis, no additional appropriation would be required under section 2, concerning General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 as a result of the request contained in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution.

In operative paragraph 11, the Secretary-General would be requested to designate the Centre for International Crime Prevention to serve as a secretariat for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in accordance with article 33 of the Convention. Given the complex nature and wide scope of the functions that the secretariat will have to perform, it is considered that the current staff resources of the Centre for International Crime Prevention would eventually need to be strengthened. It is not possible to assess at this stage the necessary staffing resources which would enable the Centre to fulfil its functions in accordance with article 33. The Secretariat would be in a position to make such assessment in the light of the recommendations which the Ad Hoc Committee will make at the preparatory meeting to be held before the first session of the Conference of the Parties, and of the decisions that the Conference of the Parties will take at its first session.

Given the importance attached by delegations to the convention, the secretariat estimates that the convention may enter into force in the biennium 2002-2003 and that the first session of the Conference of the Parties would be held in 2003. On the basis of this assumption, the Secretariat would include related proposals in the 2002-2003 programme budget.

In operative paragraph 12 of the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would be requested to provide the Centre for International Crime Prevention with the resources necessary to carry out its work related to the

implementation of the convention, to the servicing of the Conference of the Parties and to the support to be provided to the Ad Hoc Committee. The attention of delegations is drawn to the provisions of resolution 45/248, part B, VI, in which the General Assembly, first, reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters; secondly, reaffirmed also the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; thirdly, expressed its concern at the tendency of its substantive Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters; and, fourthly, invited the Secretary-General to provide all intergovernmental bodies with the required information regarding procedures for administrative and budgetary matters.

In the absence of any provision in the draft resolution or in the Convention regarding the funding of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat assumes that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties would be financed from the United Nations regular budget. It is therefore the intention of the Secretary-General to include in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 appropriate resources for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the Ad Hoc Committee acting as a preparatory committee to the first session of the Conference of the Parties. It is also the understanding of the Secretariat that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the Ad Hoc Committee would be held in Vienna in accordance with the provision of resolution 40/243 of 8 December 1985.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime", recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, as orally corrected by its Chairman.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, as orally corrected by its Chairman?

The draft resolution, as orally corrected by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the

Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was adopted (resolution 55/25).

The President: Before calling on the representative of Japan for an explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind the Assembly that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Nobuyasu (Japan): Today, 15 November 2000, marks a historic, giant step by the world in its fight against organized crime. The General Assembly has just adopted the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two related protocols. Japan wholeheartedly welcomes this historic step and expresses its appreciation to Ambassador Luigi Lauriola and all the other officers of the Ad Hoc Committee, all the delegations, members of the Secretariat and the interpreters who worked, burning the midnight oil, to finish the work to elaborate these important international instruments throughout the long, difficult negotiations.

For its part, Japan joined the efforts to conclude the negotiations, serving as one of the Vice-Chairs, hosting a number of preparatory meetings and providing moral, political and financial support to facilitate the work of the participants. Japan notes with great regret, however, that agreement was not reached on a draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, in order to supplement the Convention. The task still remains, therefore, for the Ad Hoc Committee to complete the work on the firearms protocol as soon as possible. Japan is determined to continue its active endeavour to bring the negotiation on the protocol to a successful conclusion for its adoption by the Assembly early next year.

As to the Convention and the two protocols that we have just adopted, Japan looks forward to the signing conference in Palermo next month and expresses its appreciation to the great contribution that the Italian Government is offering. It is now incumbent upon the world community to ensure that those instruments have as universal an application as possible and to spread their effective implementation around the world.

In order to help build capacity in the field of criminal justice in developing countries in particular, Japan is prepared to hold seminars or training courses and continue to contribute to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Fund. As a starter, Japan is hosting an Asia-Pacific law enforcement conference against transnational organized crime in January next year.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 105.

Agenda item 42

Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Report of the Preparatory Committee (A/55/43 (Parts I and II))

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/429)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.34)

The President: It is my pleasure to address this plenary meeting on an agenda item of high importance for the General Assembly — its special session on children, to be held in 2001.

This special session is of personal interest to me. In September 1990, I had the honour of representing my country at the World Summit for Children. On that occasion, an unprecedented dialogue among 71 world leaders led to a universal appeal to ensure a better future for every child. I had the opportunity of being directly involved in helping galvanize political will at the highest level through an action-oriented agenda devoted to the most fragile component of the social fabric — our children.

Ten years after that unique experience, I share with many the feeling that significant progress has been achieved — and yet many challenges remain in front of us.

As a result of the World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, attention to children has indeed increased. A vast majority of countries have now ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The needs and rights of children have also been the subject of major United Nations events held during the 1990s such as the international conferences on population, on

women, on social development and on human settlements.

However, the suffering of millions of children around the world shows that the goals and commitments of the World Summit for Children remain far from fulfilled. More effective policies and programmes in more countries are urgently required to keep the promise made to children in September 1990.

At the beginning of the new millennium, we are confident that focusing on our children as the most vulnerable and cherished part of our societies, we can agree on effective actions to ensure their survival, protection, full development and participation.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders renewed the global commitment to children by addressing such specific issues as eradicating poverty, reducing child and maternal mortality, ensuring assistance and protection in cases of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, as well the imperative to give all children, including girls, a basic education of good quality.

This plenary session is an important step towards this global commitment in considering the process leading to the special session in September 2001, delegations might wish to bear in mind the spirit, which prevailed during the Summit in 1990. As world leaders then declared "there can be no task nobler than giving every child a better future."

I should like to inform members that in a letter dated 21 September 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of September, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of the Holy See in the debate of agenda item 42 entitled "Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer of the Holy See in the debate on this item?

It was so decided.

The President: I should also like to inform members that, in a letter dated 6 October 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 42.

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on this item?

It was so decided.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco) (spoke in French): Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the special session on children, will be presenting draft resolution A/55/L.34 to the Assembly for its approval.

We thank her very warmly for her remarkable work and would also like to thank Ambassador Schumacher of the Federal Republic of Germany and the very many delegations that participated in the consultations. In this way they displayed their countries' firm commitment to improving the fate of children throughout the world.

The World Summit for Children in 1990 was the first of the great meetings and conferences held by the General Assembly in the decade that is now winding up. Ten years is time enough for Governments to obtain the statistics needed to review outcomes and evaluate progress achieved in the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and its Plan of Action, which were adopted in 1990.

This stocktaking should enable leaders to commit to new initiatives, which will then appear indispensable. It will also enable them to renew their support in fields where we have not achieved our objectives.

In this perspective the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the major legal instrument in the field of

human rights that has received the widest support and thus must remain the cornerstone and source of inspiration for everything we do in the future for children.

It seems to us entirely justified that we use the concept of life cycle proposed by the Secretary-General in his report when we study the rights and well-being of children and teenagers and that we decide together on future action, which will have to be specific, concrete and quantifiable in the three areas which I will now describe in greater detail.

A good start in life is important and the health and education of the mother will affect this good start. If there has been important progress, particularly as regards breast-feeding and access to health care, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the transmission of the virus from mother to child have posed a new challenge that we must meet. Global access to basic social services is also a major objective. Health and food are complementary.

The world campaign to eradicate polio is a symbol of what a united international community can achieve through solidarity. A good start also means not being denied the basic right to an identity and a nationality. Universal birth records must thus unreservedly be encouraged; they are fundamental.

Mr. Aboud (Comoros), Vice-President took the Chair.

Without education it is impossible to imagine eradicating poverty. It is our strongest card in the fight against poverty. In working through education for development, we are also reducing the risks of armed conflicts, of which children are often the main victims. We must therefore favour this area of action. What is the point of discussing universal access to information technology if the population does not benefit in the first place from the education required to make use of the great tool that computer science is? Developing States must then receive additional resources to bring about more general basic education, including computer science. Gender parity is of essential importance in this field. Statistics tend to show that an educated mother is an additional opportunity for her children to blossom.

An environment conducive to adolescents to enable them to fulfil their potential is important. The particularly difficult period of transition from

childhood to adulthood demands that Governments hold a constructive dialogue with young people. A participatory approach is definitely to be favoured, particularly within the nucleus of the family. An encouraging environment for many teenagers who have only experienced violence, war and refugee camps includes, first and foremost, access to vocational training. Learning a trade means stability and the start of a normal existence. It will also protect them against exploitation in the workplace, prostitution or the use of drugs.

The financial resources and expertise to obtain these objectives exist, which the Preparatory Committee will define at the two forthcoming sessions to be held in January and June 2001.

The new challenges posed by economic globalization, the proliferation of armed conflict and the HIV/AIDS pandemic call for new responses that can only be achieved through deeper reflection and strengthened political commitment.

We must not forget that we will also have to adopt the necessary modalities to bring about the active and ongoing participation of non-governmental organizations, which work in the field with Government authorities, children and adolescents themselves. The Principality is studying the possibility of including youth and youth group representatives in its delegation to the special session.

My delegation also fully supports the special event planned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to be held in parallel with the special session. We support the participation of children and teenagers, as well as actors from civil society and the private sector.

On the threshold of the decisive preparatory process for our children's future, we hope resolutely, working together and inspired by the same desire to contribute to the universal implementation of the rights of the child, that we will prepare the General Assembly to repeat the experience of 1990, in which everything seemed possible, and that on the eve of 21 September 2001, at the beginning of that night, the participants of the special session devoted to children will experience, not only the feeling of well-being that accomplishment brings, but also the firm conviction that the new objectives to be established will be within their grasp.

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing the Principality of Monaco's gratitude to the United Nations Children's Fund. Thanks to its unremitting activity, this organization is at the core of much of the progress achieved for the improvement of children's conditions in many parts of the world, particularly in the least developed countries, for which we are especially grateful.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Together with Canada, Egypt, Mali, Pakistan and Sweden, Mexico had the honour of sponsoring the World Summit for Children, held here in 1990. The national programmes of action drafted in accordance with the outcome of the World Summit have succeeded in consolidating States' commitment to protecting the rights of children and in encouraging the participation of broad sectors of society in the promotion of progress in the areas of health, education, environmental health and social assistance. Undoubtedly, these are positive steps in the right direction.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that the agreed commitments to international cooperation have not been fully implemented, nor have the shared targets been fully achieved. Despite important advances, many challenges undoubtedly remain. One challenge is basic: ensuring the benefits of globalization for children in the framework of genuine sustainable development, imbued with justice and equity.

At the Millennium Summit, our heads of State and Government made the great political commitment to ensure that by 2015 all the boys and girls throughout the world will be able to complete a full cycle of primary education and ensure that girls, as well as boys, will have equal access to all levels of education. At the Millennium Summit, Mexico signed the Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

With regard to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 2001 in follow-up to the World Summit for Children, Mexico wishes to emphasize the importance of focusing our efforts on translating into reality by concrete actions the letter and spirit of each of the great commitments made by the international community for children.

With these lofty purposes in mind, my country enthusiastically joined the Kingston consensus at the

Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Jamaica last October, in preparation of the special session. This document underpins the region's political will to carry out concrete actions for the integrated development of children and it constitutes a valuable contribution to the special session preparatory process.

In implementation of the commitments entered into at the Summit, Mexico is continuing to pursue a State policy for children with the overall purpose of ensuring their survival and promoting their development and welfare, in addition to protecting women of child-bearing age. To that end, we have valuable mechanisms for discussion and coordination, such as the National Action Commission for Children, which is an inter-sectoral and inter-institutional body, and the National Action Programme for Children at the federal and state levels.

With regard to the immediate future, we have identified the need to continue to work in the following priority areas: first, to reduce maternal and child mortality; secondly, to improve information and access to family planning services; thirdly, to expand the coverage of basic services, including drinking water supply and sewerage in rural and urban marginalized areas; fourthly, to enhance the quality of education at all levels, including basic education, with a clear policy of gender equality; fifthly, to reduce the number of children who are victims of physical and psychological violence, neglect and injustice — especially among the indigenous population.

While reaffirming Mexico's commitment to the great task of international cooperation to fight for the survival and development of children, we express the hope that the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children will help to consolidate a major global alliance to achieve our common objectives. If we are to secure lasting success, and especially if we are to extend that success to the most marginalized areas and people, it is important to promote integrated programmes and more effective measures against poverty. At the same time, national efforts must be supported by redoubled international cooperation. Mexico will continue to work hard and with commitment to attain those goals. In that spirit, Mexico has joined the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.34, which will be introduced by Ambassador Durrant, the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the preparatory process for the 2001 special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the recommendations of the World Summit for Children (A/55/429). I would also like to convey my thanks to the Preparatory Committee for its report, contained in parts I and II of document A/55/43, and to express my gratitude for the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy, to affirm the rights of children and to develop their potential and abilities. I reaffirm my country's full commitment to supporting every effort to give the necessary attention to the situation of children, as they are the essence of the future and the hope for progress.

Focusing on the physical, mental and psychological development of children is an economic and social duty incumbent upon all the countries and cultures of the world, irrespective of their levels of economic development and scientific advancement. It also represents an investment in the future, as today's children are tomorrow's leaders.

Egypt believes that the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basic framework for all programmes and strategies aimed at promoting children's welfare and protecting their full rights throughout the world. A matter of both pride and joy for my delegation is the fact that, for the first time in the history of human rights mechanisms, we have achieved near universality in ratifying the Convention. The attainment of 191 ratifications attests to the international commitment to protect the rights and potential of children, promote their interests and safeguard their dignity.

Egypt is pleased to have been among the first States to adhere to this international Convention on children. Our President is also gratified to issue the proclamation of the Second Decade for the Protection and Care of Egyptian Children, which will be celebrated from 2000-2010. That document included every necessary social, cultural and legislative element to ensure the development of children, their potential and capabilities through the concerted efforts of governmental and non-governmental bodies. Egypt has stressed its commitment to promote the rights of children by establishing the National Maternity and Childhood Council, providing encouragement to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in the

rights, education and health of children, and making available care and services for special children, such as the handicapped, the sick and orphans.

Child labour is considered one of the most important issues related to the rights of the child. In that regard, my delegation would like to express its reservations regarding any attempt to exploit the humanitarian aspect of child labour in order to impose protectionist or trade measures on the exports of developing countries, instead of trying to find a real solution to this social phenomenon by encouraging Governments' efforts to put an end to child labour and by setting up serious programmes for rehabilitating those children involved.

Egypt believes that it is important to deal with the issue of child labour in a comprehensive manner, as this issue is linked to the prevalence of poverty in societies and to the rights of people to development. My country's steadfast position in this regard is reflected in the following three elements. First, we object to any attempt to link respect for basic labour criteria to international trade under the guise of children's rights. Secondly, it is important to develop significant vocational training programmes aimed at children who leave the education system so as to allow them to contribute positively to their countries. Thirdly, we must call on donor countries to contribute to vocational programmes.

Egypt encourages the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF to continue to lend their attention to child labour within the context of cooperating with the developing countries concerned. Part of Egypt's promotion of the protection of children was to ban children from taking part in hazardous work and to develop databases to track child labour. Egypt has also established networks of trade unions, employers and NGOs to monitor current legislation.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Despite the achievements registered in the past decade, developments have taken place that have adversely affected children. These include economic crises, debt crises, the spread of epidemics, and the exacerbation of the problem of sexual trafficking in children and of child prostitution.

One of the most dangerous of these phenomena is the spread of armed conflict and the fact that civilians are often most affected. This has led to international efforts to ban the recruitment of children in armed conflict, to protect them from organized violence, to rehabilitate them and to return them to their families and homeland.

I should like to point out here the importance of the protection of children and respect for their basic rights, in particular the right to life, physical well-being and development, especially in occupied territories and in areas of armed conflict. In this connection, I believe that an end should be put to all violence and military acts directed against children in the occupied Arab territories. Israeli forces continue to kill Palestinian children and to ignore their cries for help. Those children are living under very difficult circumstances, and their plight weighs on the conscience of humanity.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the importance of bringing to a successful conclusion the special session of the General Assembly, to be held in 2001, to follow up on the recommendations of the World Summit for Children. We hope that this will support the global solidarity aimed at promoting the rights of children by encouraging cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations in this area. We further hope that the international community will intensify its efforts to mobilize the necessary funds and the political will to protect children, who are the mainstay of the present and the hope for peace for the future.

Egypt is prepared to offer its full cooperation to this end. The children deserve no less.

Mr. Khare (India): At the outset, we would like to commend the Permanent Representative of Jamaica and the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for their tireless efforts in ensuring the success of the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/55/429), which clearly brings out the need for mobilization of additional resources to break the cycle of poverty in one generation.

India's achievement of the World Summit goals has been positive, if not total. Certain areas which call for mission-oriented goals — for example,

immunization or water supply — depend on resources and the provision of services, whereas other goals are more complex and require attitudinal changes at the community level and convergence from several sectors and civil society partners. Democratic and open processes of decision-making and implementation require time for consensus-building and for motivating people.

Understandably, such processes take longer and are more difficult to bring to fruition, although, of course, the gains obtained in a democratic set-up, with the participation of all, are certainly more permanent and easier to sustain. Under these circumstances, India has made appreciable progress towards goals such as immunization and literacy, whereas there has been less progress in areas such as sanitation and the combat against malnutrition. The commitment and continued perseverance of the Government is firm, and we are confident that we are progressing on the right track, recognizing the need for decentralization and convergence as two important planks for achieving these goals.

State programmes of action on children in all major states were devised after the National Plan of Action was finalized in 1992. The process of preparation of the state programmes, in which a rights-based approach has been adopted, has allowed subnational planning and ownership, and mobilization of resources at the local level. We are already implementing the National Plan of Action for the Girl Child, prepared in the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Decade of the Girl Child (1991-2000), under which specific goals for girl children are given special attention.

India has undertaken, with the cooperation of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 53 multiple-indicator cluster surveys (MICS) at the state and union territory levels to obtain information on more than 80 indicators relevant to the condition of women and children. The second National Family Health Survey and the second generation of multiple-indicator cluster surveys, together with a number of existing and ongoing data-collection systems, will provide reliable information on progress towards World Summit goals at both the national and subnational levels, and for preparing future actions that are based on more accurate data.

We have participated actively and constructively with other delegations in both sessions of the Preparatory Committee in February and May this year and have carefully read its reports, contained in document A/55/43. During this process, we have carefully listened to the statements of other delegations and have learnt from their experiences. Our views on the key issues and trends that should be the focus of our attention as we approach the special session are well known. We would therefore very briefly refer to only some of them.

We believe that the outcome of the special session should be a focused, intergovernmentally negotiated document which must be concise, short and action-oriented. Some of the key ingredients that we would wish to see in this document are the following.

First, steps should be taken to implement the unfinished agenda of the World Summit for Children, including crucial questions related to the mobilization of resources. Second, agreement should be reached on the efforts required at all levels for the eradication of poverty. The central feature of our future actions in the twenty-first century should be to break the vicious circle of poverty that creates, and recreates, undernourished infants, poorly educated young children and marginalized adolescents, and leads to unsafe and premature motherhood, all of which fundamentally undermine the fulfilment of individual rights.

Third, a strategy is needed to combat malnutrition intergenerationally in children and infants, in adolescents, and in pregnant and lactating mothers. Fourth, there must be a reiteration of the importance of literacy and education, including the promotion of the values of compassion, tolerance and caring — values which were resoundingly endorsed by our heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration.

Fifth, we must focus on improving the quality of the water supply and on the provision of better sanitation facilities. Sixth, a focus is also required on the special needs of adolescents, whose increasing numbers represent a particularly important challenge. And seventh, attention must be given to children in special circumstances, including those affected by terrorism and armed conflict, as well as child labour; street children; delinquent children; and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

In all of these areas, special attention should be accorded to the girl child, whose growth and development are of paramount importance for the well-being of the children of the next generation. Only this approach can possibly secure appreciable gains within a single generation.

The involvement of the community, not only in structuring the future programmes, but also in their implementation and monitoring, is also of great importance.

In the belief that the special session will contribute to the creation of a future of hope and fulfilment for all the world's children, we have co-sponsored the draft resolution to be introduced by Ambassador Durrant, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee, and we look forward to receiving the draft of the proposed outcome from the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee as early as possible, to ensure its early finalization.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): Ten years after the World Summit, the time is now right for the world to renew its commitment to children. With its near-universal ratification, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has undoubtedly become the centrepiece for international and national action to protect and promote the rights of the child. Moreover, the goals of the Convention have been significantly bolstered this year by the two landmark Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. However, global mobilization is required to ensure the spirit of the letter is transformed into reality. Ratification of these instruments alone will not suffice. The well-being of children requires political action at the highest level, action that places children at the heart of every political, social and economic agenda.

The special session of the General Assembly on children next year has a decisive role to play in providing the international community with a unique opportunity to take stock of its achievements to date and to prepare itself for the evolving challenges to be faced by children in the future. More importantly, it is envisaged to be the most representative gathering for children the world has ever seen. In a most fundamental manner, this in itself will act as a catalyst to restore the momentum needed to establish a long-term strategy with updated goals, thus bringing the

Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children into the twenty-first century. The modalities for achieving this must be reviewed in the context of evolving challenges, on the one hand, and of lessons learned, on the other. Additionally, we should draw from other initiatives which attempt to define a broad framework of action with time-bound goals for Governments in partnership with other actors, such as the global Polio Eradication Initiative.

The Republic of Croatia attaches particular importance to viewing the special session as a comprehensive process rather than just as an event *per se*. We see this process as issuing a clarion call for integral social change, dissemination and dialogue, as well as for raising awareness among all sectors of society. It is here particularly that the preparatory process, such as the national governmental reviews, will play a crucial role as a vehicle by which we will identify and determine future policies for children. Furthermore, the outcomes of regional events and national efforts will substantively enrich the whole process, as well as the final outcome of the special session itself.

In this respect, a national working group has been established in the Republic of Croatia with the exclusive mandate to prepare for active participation in and follow-up to the special session. Furthermore, under the new Government, a programme of change in the Republic of Croatia has been instituted which is committed to building a civil society under which particular attention is being given to children and youth for their harmonious development in a secure and favourable environment. With this in mind, the Republic of Croatia looks forward to working closely with all relevant actors under the competent guidance of the United Nations Children's Fund, as the substantive secretariat, in concerting its efforts and political commitment towards ensuring a successful agenda for this special session.

Our children are the future of the world, and the millennium that is open in front of us belongs in essence to them. We all want to make a difference for our future generations, and our efforts must not stop with the special session. Hence, promoting children's rights must remain high on the agenda. Transforming this global commitment into a real challenge for children remains a task that must engage everyone. The seeds of new approaches are often to be found in the children themselves, and their interests must

considered. If we are wise enough to allow them to play their role in the whole process — and if this is coupled with real commitment on the part of all other pertinent actors — then perhaps we will be ready to make long-term investments to guarantee the best interests of all our children in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*):

We have been participating with great interest in the preparatory process for the special session to follow up on the World Summit for Children, which is to be held next September. The review of the commitments undertaken in the September 1990 World Summit for Children Declaration regarding the survival, protection and development of the child should lead us to a careful evaluation of the commitments made then that have yet to be fulfilled, of what has to be done in order to make real progress towards their fulfilment, of the new challenges facing our children in the new millennium and of how the international community can now address these challenges.

We must shoulder our responsibility for the present and future of humanity. We must avoid leaving our children the rubble of a modern civilization that is succumbing to extreme poverty, curable diseases and the tragic and ever-expanding AIDS pandemic; to malnutrition and high rates of infant mortality; to armed conflicts and wars of all types; to the sale of and trafficking in minors for whatever purposes; to child prostitution and the physical and sexual abuse of children, paedophilia, the use of children in pornography and sexual tourism; to the illicit sale of human tissues and organs for transplants; to the exploitation of child labour and the lack of future prospects for children who wander and live in the streets in the company of drugs and delinquency.

The statistics offer eloquent proof of the reality that confronts many children in the world today. More than 11 million boys and girls under the age of five die every year from diseases that in the overwhelming majority of cases were preventable. In the third world 64 children out of every thousand live births die before they reach one year of age. In the developing countries as a whole, the mortality rate for children under five is 95 per thousand live births. Two out of five children in third world countries suffer from stunted growth, and one out of three are underweight for their age. Two million girls are forced into prostitution. In the developing countries about 250 million children under the age of 15 have to work in order to survive. In

addition, there is the tragic effect on children and young people of the AIDS pandemic, which to date has taken the lives of almost 4 million children under the age of 15, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. At the end of 1999, 13.2 million children under the age of 15 throughout the world had lost a mother or both parents to AIDS. By the same date, 860,000 children in sub-Saharan Africa had lost their teachers to this disease.

The efforts at the national level must be accompanied by a new philosophy of international solidarity that will make it possible to generate the necessary resources to help developing countries implement their national plans to follow up on the Summit. To this end, official development assistance (ODA) must finally reach the goals to which the developed countries have committed themselves. The commitment to "collective responsibility", undertaken by our heads of State in the Millennium Declaration, must be translated into reality.

If we really want to bring about a world in which boys and girls enjoy their rights, we have to change the unfair global economic order, which works for 20 per cent of the population but excludes and degrades the remaining 80 per cent. The scourge of the external debt undermines the right to development of the countries of the South, destabilizing their economies and forcing them to divert their scarce resources to external debt repayment and servicing, to the detriment of economic and social development. As UNICEF has rightly said, indebtedness has the face of a child, because children pay the highest price for its damaging consequences.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report on the preparations for the special session, globalization has had negative impacts; it has brought about tremendous exclusion for children. The challenge is to transform this process into a positive force, whose benefits would reach all on an equal footing and would bring about economic and social development for all, and not only for the wealthiest and most advanced countries, as it has up to now.

The key to progress towards resolving the most serious problems of our children is still to eliminate poverty, malnutrition and disease. Even if we have to redouble our efforts to bring about the harmonious and integral development of children as human beings, we cannot give up our efforts to bring about progress in their education and training, in the active participation of children and teenagers in processes of direct

importance to them, and in the struggle to secure the requisite social services for all, a realistic objective for a significant percentage of children in the world, unfortunately reduced to mere survival.

In the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the commitments undertaken by the international community to confront the serious problems and needs of children and teenagers in the world are more important than ever. In this sense, Cuba welcomes the adoption this year of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the participation of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, prostitution and child pornography, which we have signed as part of our policy of cooperation with human rights instruments and as part of our firm commitment to the progress and well-being of children.

With deep pride, we point to the progress that has been made in my country with regard to children. From the beginning of life, in Cuba no effort is spared to ensure that each child — boy or girl — has access to integral development. All Cuban children and youth have free access to schools and teachers. Over the past 40 years, excellent doctors have been trained, as well as paramedical personnel, who, in addition to protecting the health and welfare of the Cuban population on a cost-free basis, have given generous help in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Despite the economic war waged against my country for nearly four decades through the illegal and criminal blockade by the United States Government, Cuba has shown that it is possible to carry out social assistance programmes, based on the principles of equality and social justice. Cuba has made remarkable achievements, such as eliminating illiteracy, raising school attendance to 98 per cent in basic education up to ninth grade, and reducing infant mortality to 6.4 in every thousand live births. We also have a child immunization programme that averts 12 diseases preventable by vaccination. The vaccination programme has enabled us to completely eradicate diphtheria, poliomyelitis, neo-natal and infantile tetanus, meningitis and tuberculosis, among other curable diseases.

Between 9 and 13 October last, the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas was held in Kingston, Jamaica. This preparatory regional meeting for the special session for

follow-up to the World Summit produced the Kingston consensus. My country supports the consensus and is committed to working on its basis with the other countries of the region, to provide input for the outcome document of the review process.

Finally, José Martí, Cuba's national hero, said "Children are the hope of the world". It is our historic collective responsibility to return hope to the millions of children who are without it now.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ten years after the World Summit for Children, we can assert that the Latin American and Caribbean region has made important progress with regard to the goals set in 1990. This should lead us to reflect that the international community should understand that the development and protection of the rights of children are an essential part of human development, not only because of their high ethical and moral content, but because the promotion and defence of children are essential to the social and economic growth of any society.

At the regional level, the Children's Summit and the Convention on the Rights of the Child promoted a series of social changes designed to bring about greater respect for and recognition of the rights of children and youth, reflected in an improvement in the standards of living of these two groups. The experience of these years shows us that political commitment and setting specific goals have a great mobilizing effect, to which we can add, among other outstanding elements, coordinated work with grassroots organizations and movements dedicated to children and youth.

As a result of Government priorities in public policy in the social area, successive unpublicized ministerial meetings of persons responsible for children were held in order to evaluate policy and share and promote national policies and commitments at the international level. This mechanism has been very useful in strengthening the interest of countries in this sensitive area, as well as in taking advantage of experience in different societies.

In 1998, Peru was the venue of the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Americas on Children and Social Policies, which offered an opportunity for the countries of the region to reaffirm their commitment to continue applying their best efforts to the needs and priorities of infants and adolescents. This responsibility brought with it assumption of the task of serving as regional temporary secretariat on children.

During the past two years, we have continued to need to count on integral regional work, enabling us to know the specific achievements and goals of the last decade. For this purpose, we worked jointly with an inter-agency committee headed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to transform this task into a reality. With the contributions of the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region, we were able to deliver this report at the last Ministerial Meeting of the decade, held a few weeks ago in Kingston, Jamaica. We believe that this supports our work, and we will, of course, soon share it with all United Nations Member States.

The outcome of the fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Jamaica, is also relevant for having provided the region with another opportunity to evaluate and compare experience related to progress and problems in their respective national programmes. On that occasion, we adopted a document entitled the Kingston Consensus, which not only reflects the regional plan of action on this subject, but also contains a set of specific guidelines for the negotiating process on the special session on children to be held in New York in September next year.

Children and young people in Latin America and the Caribbean today enjoy a higher probability of survival, of living in homes provided with basic services, of being fed healthy food and of attending school. We must acknowledge, however, that no marked progress has been achieved in terms of maternal mortality and the reduction of illiteracy. These are spheres that involve mainly women, but which have an impact on the family and on the life of the nation. This reflects the fact that gender differences continue to influence such basic areas as nutrition, primary education and survival, among others.

On a national level, the progress that my Government has been making to improve the quality of life of boys, girls and adolescents in general has depended on the valuable participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations. This has been articulated through the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Human Development. This sector assumes the duties of a governing body of the national system for the comprehensive care of children and youth. It works with decentralized public institutions in the sectors of health, education, labour, and justice, as well as with local Governments and administrative units in each

sector. It thereby seeks to be directly in touch with the needs of the community in order to address its problems and needs and to prevent violations of and promote the basic rights of individuals, particularly during infancy and adolescence. To that end, the Government has designed the 1996-2000 national plan of action for children, the 1998-2000 national nutrition and food plan and the 1998-2002 national population plan. The goal of the national plan of action for children is to promote and safeguard the full application of the rights of boys and girls and to contribute to a poverty-eradication strategy with survival, development and protection as its goals.

To briefly refer to the legal sphere of protection, a new code for children and adolescents has recently been enacted. Since 1993, public defender offices for children and adolescents have been operating to safeguard the rights recognized by legislation, focusing on the elimination of child abuse and domestic violence. They also perform counselling and information work.

The protection and development of children and youth entail the elimination of violence against women and within the family, since violence is the result of the asymmetric relationship caused by inequality. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the status of women and disadvantaged groups by raising their standards of living, thus allowing them better access to and opportunities for development.

In the area of education, the Constitution guarantees access to mandatory education at the initial, primary and secondary levels. Education is free of charge in government institutions at the various levels, including the higher level of public universities. Among the priorities of the Peruvian Government in this field are the elimination of illiteracy and the promotion of intercultural education to preserve the varied cultural and linguistic expressions of the country. In this sense, I wish to mention that our national literacy programme received the King Sejong Literacy Prize from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1999 for having introduced elements for the prevention of family violence, reproductive health and entrepreneurial management into the curriculum. To improve the quality of education, we seek to expand educational coverage, to reduce the percentage of boys, girls and youth who are compelled to enter school at a late age, and to lower the dropout rate.

The national programme to care for orphans of terrorist violence was created in 1999 to offer comprehensive protection through social, productive and psychological development activities for children and youth affected by the terrorist violence that was a scourge of the country for many years.

Finally, with regard to child labour, an ongoing subject of international debate, Peru does not permit teenagers to work full-time. However, our reality is not fully in accordance with the standards, since it is very difficult to achieve a change in mentality and to outlaw traditional practices. That is why campaigns are under way to make the community aware of the rights of boys, girls and youths. We are also developing programmes to discourage child labour and to protect working conditions for teenagers.

The interest of the Peruvian Government in promoting and protecting the rights of boys, girls and youths is also reflected in its recent signing of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the participation of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Lastly, I wish to reassert Peru's commitment to the promotion and protection of boys, girls and adolescents, a measure that must be undertaken with the greatest responsibility, for it is a moral obligation to coming generations, the citizens of the future and the richest potential of any society.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as Iceland and Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

The World Summit for Children, which coincided with the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, marked a very important and ambitious stage in the process of improving the welfare of children in the world. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was in itself one of the most important outcomes of the last decade in terms of the implementation of the rights of the child throughout the world.

The World Summit for Children stood out from the other international conferences and meetings on social issues held over the past 10 years, first by virtue of the concise and specific nature of the undertakings contained in the World Declaration and Plan of Action, and secondly by virtue of the measures to follow up and oversee progress achieved, in the form of both a mid-term review in 1996 and a regular report to the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) every year since 1992.

The special session of the General Assembly to be held next year as a follow-up to the World Summit should, like the Summit itself, be innovative in its approach, ambitious in its targets, pragmatic in its results and totally focused on seeking ways to improve the situation of children.

The European Union is glad that even before the convening of this special session significant decisions to benefit children have been taken at the United Nations recently. In particular, there was the General Assembly's adoption in May of the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Similarly, the adoption by the General Conference in June 1999 of the International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour is a major development for the rights of children. The European Union calls on all States to sign, ratify and implement these new instruments as soon as possible.

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, contains several important commitments concerning the rights of the child, covering access to education; reducing maternal and infant mortality; combating communicable diseases, in particular AIDS; assistance for children orphaned by AIDS; sustainable development; and protection of the rights of the child. The Millennium Declaration also underlines the importance of protecting children against the consequences of armed conflict. The European Union is convinced that these commitments, which complement those of the World Summit for Children, should be taken fully into account in preparations for the special session in 2001, when the international community will be asked to renew its determination to improve the rights and welfare of children.

The European Union sets great store by the completion of an objective, accurate and uncompromising review of the implementation, 10 years on, of the undertakings entered into at the World Summit. The national reports which States have been requested to forward to the Secretariat of the Preparatory Committee by December will be a vital source of information in conducting such a review. The European Union hopes that the Secretariat will receive many such reports, with statistical annexes, so that the fullest and most accurate review possible can be made with a view to discussions of the subject at the next Preparatory Committee meeting and at the special session itself.

The European Union believes that, as well as reviewing the last 10 years in terms of the commitments made and targets set at the World Summit, next year's special session should also take account of the new or emerging child-related problems which were not properly dealt with in 1990. The emerging issues include poverty; armed conflict and other forms of violence; discrimination, particularly against women and girls; and AIDS and its devastating implications for the situation of children. One of the conclusions of a recent seminar in Africa on the question of the rights of the child and AIDS was that children and young people were particularly exposed to infection owing to the lack of proper sex education. The European Union considers it crucial that children and pre-pubescent youngsters should be given sound and appropriate information on their rights and their sexual health. We also believe that we should step up our efforts on matters on which we have been taking action for longer, but which are still a priority, such as combating child labour or promoting better access to education for children, particularly girls.

The European Union, as it has already stated at the initial preparatory meetings, hopes that all the institutions concerned in one way or another with children, both inside and outside the United Nations system, will become involved. We are also keen to see the participation of experts, research bodies and academic institutions that take an interest in children's issues.

And of course children themselves, who are the most concerned, must be able to make their voices clearly heard in the preparation of the decisions concerning them, and must be assured of a significant role in the special session. That children have a right to

express themselves is one of the commitments made by the signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the preparatory process and the special session seems to us essential to the full success of the session. In this context, we welcome the proposals adopted by the Preparatory Committee on the accreditation of NGOs. We hope that the issue of how NGOs are to participate in the September 2001 session will rapidly be resolved in a way which will enable them to play their full part in a debate in which their experience and commitment to children are indispensable.

We feel that preparatory conferences at the regional level can play an essential part in ensuring the widest possible preparation for the September 2001 deadline and in effectively mobilizing all the participants. The European Union welcomes the fact that such meetings have been scheduled in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As part of its own preparation, the European Union has planned several meetings designed to consolidate its regional approach to children's issues. One such meeting is the seminar I have already mentioned, which was recently organized with the African countries on the rights of the child and AIDS. On 20 November, the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a meeting in Paris of all European Ministers responsible for children will give a European dimension to Universal Children's Day. This will provide the opportunity for an appraisal of how the Convention on the Rights of the Child is being applied in relation to certain jointly determined issues and to launch initiatives to step up member States' cooperation with regard to children. Next year further similar meetings will be held in the European context.

We expect the special session to adopt a clear, concise final document, which should reflect the political will of the international community and not only reaffirm the validity of the commitments already entered into, but also propose the necessary measures to overcome the obstacles encountered in implementing the 1990 Plan and launch new action on the basis of the emerging issues.

In this context, the draft document currently being prepared on the Bureau's responsibility, with the help of UNICEF, is of particular importance. We understand that the draft should be sent to

Governments in the next few days so that initial reactions can be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee. The European Union is anxious to receive the draft as soon as possible to enable it to determine its positions for that meeting.

The European Union takes this opportunity to pay tribute once again to UNICEF's vigilance each year in following up the World Summit, for its decisive contribution to the preparation of the 2001 session and for the efficiency and dedication with which Ms. Bellamy and her team carry out the Secretariat duties entrusted to them.

In conclusion, the European Union looks forward to the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution submitted to the Assembly by the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, incorporating the draft decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its last meeting.

Mrs. Stanik (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to speak on this subject on behalf of the GUUAM group of countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova.

Children have always been and remain at the centre of attention and concern in human society because they are the ones who determine its future development. The well-being of society in turn depends on its attitude towards children, on how it meets the interests and needs of children, how it understands their problems and how it responds to them.

In September 1990, heads of State and Government met at the World Summit to examine the situation of children in the world and to join their efforts to ensure the survival, protection and development of children. As a result of this meeting, the World Declaration and Plan of Action were adopted and then approved by 181 countries. Today, looking at the past decade we can see what have been the successes and failures in their implementation.

The most significant contribution of States to protecting and encouraging the rights of children was the universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Quite recently, the Convention was supplemented by two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The process of accession by Member States to these documents give us reason to hope that they will receive the same broad support as the Convention itself.

Several of the GUUAM States have already signed both Optional Protocols and the others will do so in the near future.

However, in spite of efforts by the international community, we are all still far from the day when the rights of the child become a reality throughout the world. Children are still the most unprotected and vulnerable part of our population. They continue to die from HIV infections and other diseases, are still victims of violence and sexual exploitation, and are sent to work at an early age and under difficult conditions.

In some parts of the world they have no access to medical services, nor even to food or drinking water.

Armed conflicts have a particularly negative effect on children, as do acts of aggression and foreign occupation. They turn them into refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Even if they can return home great damage is done at a moral level, which will be very difficult to heal. Another problem is that of hostages. It is no accident that the Commission on the Status of Women has for several years adopted a resolution entitled "Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts", calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all women and children who have been taken hostage. In this connection, the GUUAM countries feel that the special session of the General Assembly will be a very important and a timely forum for the world community to analyse the achievements of the Plan of Action, to renew its obligations and to take on new ones in the twenty-first century.

Our Governments have always considered the problems related to the protection of the interests of children to be a priority of our national policies. In our countries we have established legal mechanisms to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the decisions adopted at the World Summit. We are developing comprehensive programmes, whose main areas are the creation of proper conditions for overall development of children, the assurance of legal and social protection and broad-ranging access to education and medical care. Particular attention by each State is being given to the

most vulnerable categories of children, including orphans, children with no parental care, invalids and also children of very poor families. These programmes have been rather successful but, at the same time, our countries continue to encounter serious difficulties.

Our States have only existed for 10 years. In trying to form a democratic society and the bases for a socially oriented economy and to achieve integration into world processes, we have encountered both internal and external difficulties. As you know, we inherited structurally distorted economies financial and banking systems in need of reform, huge debts and deficits in our balances of payments. This situation is made worse by the environmental crisis in some countries, armed conflicts in other countries, and unstable situations along the borders of others. Ukraine, for example, continues to be preoccupied with the negative consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe, which has led to many serious and dangerous diseases that are a threat to mothers and children.

In our statement we have only touched upon a few of the vital problems concerned with the situation of children in our countries. Previous speakers have demonstrated that each State and each region has its own difficulties, its own specifics, and yet most of the questions are global. Their solution is only possible by joint efforts.

A special session of the General Assembly in 2001 should provide the impetus for concentrated and combined efforts on the part of the world community to deal with the obstacles of today and the challenges of tomorrow. Our delegations expect that the results of the forum will be directed towards specific practical results.

The future plan of action should be innovative, concise and comprehensive. It should take into account the interests of the industrial developed countries and the developing countries, as well as the countries in transition.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General and fully share his view of the value of a comprehensive approach to ensuring the rights and well-being of children. We also agree with the set of new questions which have been proposed for the final document: enjoying the benefits and avoiding the negative consequences of globalization; breaking the cycle of poverty in the life of a generation; protecting

vulnerable children; the participation of children and young people in decision making; the well-being of women; education of girls; and the fight against various diseases, including HIV infection.

In connection with HIV/AIDS, I should like to recall the recent initiative by Ukraine, supported by 97 countries, to hold a special session of the General Assembly in June next year to deal with the problems of HIV/AIDS. We think it is necessary to establish close links between both international forums on questions concerning ways to overcome this plague of the twenty-first century. The strategies produced at the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly should be taken into account in the twenty-sixth session in elaborating the strategy to combat AIDS with respect to children.

The GUAAM countries highly appreciate the role of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the process of preparing the forthcoming forum. Taking advantage of this opportunity I would like to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, for her personal enormous contribution to this work.

On behalf of all our delegations, I would like to assure the Assembly that Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan will continue to participate actively in the preparatory process for the special session and the forum.

Quite recently, the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit adopted a Declaration containing a strategy and tactics for the construction of the world in the twenty-first century — a world free of war and violence, poverty and disease; a world of security, justice and happiness. Today's generation of children will have to build such a world, implementing the decisions adopted by the United Nations in these historic days.

What will these children be like? Will they be able to meet the challenges of globalization, overcome the environmental and economic problems and provide social progress, rights and freedom for all people? Will they have the strength in a few years to assume responsibility for the future of mankind? We have a year to work out positive solutions to these questions.

Mr. Mangachi (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation is gratified that in September next year the General Assembly will convene a special session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In this

connection, I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on the agenda item before the Assembly, contained in document A/55/429, as well as the report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", contained in document A/AC.256/3. These reports are important inputs to the preparatory process for the special session to review the World Summit for Children.

I wish also to express appreciation to the German delegation for coordinating in a constructive manner the draft resolution on this agenda item.

The special session to review the World Summit for Children will afford us an opportunity for appraisal of the implementation of the goals contained in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, adopted a decade ago. The special session will also provide us with an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to fulfilling the commitments we made in 1990 and to undertaking a renewed commitment to finding new practical ways of solving problems that continue to face our children.

The analysis done by UNICEF indicates that over the last 10 years progress has been made in the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All Governments except two have ratified this important Convention. However, children, particularly those in the developing countries, continue to face serious challenges, such as deepening poverty and greater inequality; proliferating conflicts and violence; the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS and continuing discrimination, particularly against women and girls. Given this serious situation, it is imperative that the special session should address these issues on an urgent basis.

As we prepare for the special session, we should especially analyse the challenges that have impeded the attainment of the goals of the World Summit for Children and the measures that need to be taken to overcome those obstacles in the future.

One reason poor countries have failed to carry out the goals of the World Summit for Children is the prevalence of abject poverty. Children are hardest hit by poverty. Some of the major causes of poverty in developing countries include, among other things, debt, declining official development assistance, lack of market access for their goods in developed countries,

low commodity prices and health problems, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis.

Concerning debt, for example, a recent survey carried out by UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme found that two thirds of the developing countries spend more on external debt servicing than on basic social services and noted that

“to spend more on external debt than on basic social services — when hundreds of millions of children lack access to basic education, primary health care, adequate food and safe drinking water — is not just morally wrong, it does not make economic sense”.

We therefore expect that the special session will discuss various measures to address the above-mentioned problems, including international support for poverty eradication programmes in developing countries.

Concerning HIV/AIDS, at the time of the World Summit for Children, the ramifications of the HIV/AIDS pandemic had not yet been fully realized. Having started with the first three victims that it claimed in 1983, when it first surfaced in my country, the pandemic now claims one out of every ten people, most of whom are young people. At present half of all new infections occur mainly in the age group of people 10 to 24 years old. The cumulative effect of this phenomenon on the nation is enormous. Furthermore, it is generally recognized that there are three ways of spreading infection. Transmission of the disease from mother to child during pregnancy or breastfeeding is, in our opinion, one of the cruellest forms of infection. It is heart-wrenching to note that HIV/AIDS has created 11 million orphans worldwide. It is catastrophic that 90 per cent of these orphans are in Africa. We hope that the special session will come up with strategies that will aim at curtailing the spread of the pandemic so as to reduce its impact on children. We would like to see the special session on HIV/ AIDS, scheduled for June 2001, feeding into the special session on children so as to build synergies in this respect.

The last 10 years have been fraught with conflicts in many parts of the world. Africa, too, has had its share of conflicts, whose impact on children has been as wide as it has been traumatic. During times of armed conflict we witness massive violations of human rights, and at times children have been drawn into conflicts

without regard for their rights. While we applaud the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in bringing to light the violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, we hope that the special session will build on the foundation laid by the Special Representative to institute a coherent framework for States' conduct in times of armed conflicts.

Associated with conflict is the problem of refugees. As a host country to refugees for over 40 years, my Government is in a good position to appreciate the traumatic effects of conflict on refugee children. Not only are the children uprooted from familiar surroundings, their childhood is interrupted as they flee to refuge, and at times they are violated while in flight. The scars inflicted on such children sometimes stay with them for life. We note with concern the assertion in Mrs. Graça Machel's report that armed conflicts kill and maim more children than soldiers. It is in this context that we support the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. We also believe that the ratification of the International Criminal Court Statute will provide the critical instrument for ending impunity and human rights violations against children.

Today the world has the knowledge, the financial resources and the technology to be able to guarantee support and critical interventions on behalf of children. As the special session meets in September next year to assess the progress of the last 10 years, we need to harness more than resources. We need to ensure that political will, at both the national and international levels, is sharpened so as to harness international cooperation aimed at breaking the stranglehold of poverty on poor countries. We need to appreciate the fact that while the world is not homogeneous, it nonetheless needs concerted efforts by all stakeholders in order to promote and protect the rights of children.

We laid a solid foundation for children in 1989 with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in 1990 with the World Summit for Children. We hope that the special session will afford us the opportunity to find meaningful ways of fulfilling the commitments towards the full enjoyment of the rights of every child.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): Ten years ago, the largest gathering of world leaders in history until that time agreed on the Declaration on the Survival, Protection

and Development of Children and a Plan of Action to implement that Declaration in the 1990s. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted only one year earlier, had set the foundation for the World Summit for Children, which in turn represented the first global action towards its implementation. Since 1990, many positive developments have taken place at the national, regional and international levels. Those developments are proof of the meaningful interaction of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention, which has achieved almost universal ratification, emphasizes the child as a bearer of rights who is entitled to a life free of discrimination, violence and exclusion, who needs to be protected and cared for and whose voice must be heard.

The process set up by the Convention and the World Summit led to greater international awareness and to ever-greater attention to children's rights and needs. Almost all of the major United Nations global conferences of the 1990s and their review processes addressed this issue. New international standards were also established, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Statute of the International Criminal Court and, most recently, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. At the national level, legal and policy measures were put in place in order to implement the Convention and to meet the targets set by the World Summit.

Nevertheless, the situation of children around the world is far from what was envisaged in the Convention and in the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action. There continue to be major challenges in areas such as maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, education — particularly that of girls — access to safe drinking water and sanitation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the lack of resources.

In a commentary entitled "The time to sow", contained in *The Progress of Nations 2000*, Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), states that

"Poverty continues to enslave huge populations, denying 1.2 billion people — 600

million of them children — good health and productive lives."

The momentum created by the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the holding of the World Summit for Children must be kept alive if we are to fulfil our commitment to give every child a better future. Brazil, whose population encompasses a very large number of children, once more reaffirms that commitment. We have already achieved most of the goals set by the World Summit for Children. Maternal and infant mortality rates have been drastically reduced. The enrolment rate for basic education is at 96 per cent, and the gender gap in education has been closed. Poliomyelitis has been eradicated. Vaccination campaigns have reached more children than ever, and the goals regarding health, reducing malnutrition, and sanitation are within reach.

We are aware, however, that there is still much to be done. To protect the rights of children and to meet the needs and fulfil the hopes of every child is our ambition and our goal. To that end, the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to follow-up the World Summit for Children can make a major contribution. It is an opportunity to address old problems as well as new challenges, and to propose further actions.

We are thankful to UNICEF for the guidance it has so far provided to the national evaluation process and for its role as the substantive secretariat for the international preparatory process. We would also like to express our appreciation for the manner in which Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, is conducting the work of the Preparatory Committee.

We are confident that the special session will adopt a new agenda for children that will uphold the rights of children as the paramount focus of national and international efforts in the next century.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly, to be held next year, is called upon not only to assess the outcome of a decade of efforts by the international community to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Children, but primarily to define tasks in this sphere for the future.

In the Russian Federation the issue of protecting mothers and children is among the specific priorities of

State policy. That is why the top leaders of the country attach paramount importance to international cooperation in this sphere. In a personal letter to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized our determined intention to develop constructive interaction with UNICEF in the interests of all children and young people. This is the central element of the Russian Federation's position regarding the preparation for the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to children's issues.

It is with satisfaction that we note the considerable work done by the UNICEF secretariat on the preparation for the special session. We welcome the targeted orientation of this process to seek out consensus among a wide circle of partners on the issues of the rights of the child and the development of their human potential. We are convinced that, together with UNICEF, the various organizations of the United Nations system that are in one way or another concerned with children's issues should make their contribution to the preparation of the special session and, in particular, to the drafting of its concluding documents. In this regard, Russia attaches an especially important role to the regional commissions, and primarily to the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Within the framework of preparation for the special session, it is necessary to continue actively to involve Governments, United Nations organizations, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society partners — including trade unions, the private sector, mass media and universities — to develop an optimum policy in the interest of children at the national, regional and international levels.

The report of the Preparatory Committee (A/55/43, part II) covers the work already done on the preparation for the special session. With good reason, it focuses attention on the problems of poverty, inequality, the proliferation of conflicts, the spread of HIV/AIDS, continuing discrimination against women and girls and other forms of social injustice as basic obstacles to the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In our opinion, it is precisely these problems that should be at the centre of the international

community's attention in developing measures in the interests of children.

That will also require an integrated approach to the promotion of the rights and well-being of children and adolescents that includes three key policy areas: creating favourable conditions for all children to have a good start in life; providing them with opportunities to get a good education; and creating favourable opportunities for adolescents to fully develop their individual capacities.

At the same time, special attention should be paid to children in dire situations. We agree with the report's recommendation that clear-cut criteria be identified for assessing progress in the implementation of the Summit goals. It is necessary also to make more effective use of experts to develop strategies in the interest of children that will aim for realistic results that can be objectively assessed. In the interest of children, clearly, such recommendations should be reflected in the agenda for the future and in the future actions to be adopted at the special session.

The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child created a solid legal basis for future action by the international community in the interest of children and of the protection of their rights. The final document of the special session should aspire to full implementation, in practice, of all the provisions of the Convention in the interest of the children of all Member States. We consider that the outcome documents of the forthcoming special session should meet the criterion of universality and should address the problems faced by children throughout the world: in developing countries, especially in Africa, in developed industrialized countries and in States in transition.

One of the key elements of preparatory work for the special session is the holding of regional events, enabling us to coordinate the interests of all countries and to take specific regional conditions into account when the international community formulates global plans of pro-child action. In that connection, we think it would be useful and important to hold a preparatory event for countries of Central and Eastern Europe, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States. Those countries share similarities with regard to the situation of children and related issues; these are defined first and foremost by the economic hardships of the transition period, relating

especially to the situation of particularly vulnerable groups of children and of children who are in the charge of the State social security system.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): I have the honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Viet Nam delegation to add our voice to the discussion of preparations for the General Assembly's special session on children, to be held in September next year. Let me first register my country's strong support for and full commitment to making the special session a great success. In that context, I would like to thank Ambassador Durrant of Jamaica and her Bureau for their leading role in carrying out the work of the Preparatory Committee, and to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its tireless support throughout the whole process.

In 10 years of implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration in the 1990s, we have witnessed remarkable progress in various areas. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by 191 countries, which clearly demonstrates almost universal political will and commitment to the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of children. We also recognize many achievements in the fields of health and education for children. But we are not yet able to say that we have attained the World Summit goals.

Moreover, we are now faced with even greater obstacles and challenges, such as deepening poverty and inequity, the growing burden of external debt, discrimination and violence, environmental problems, the explosive spread of HIV/AIDS and the proliferation of armed conflict. We need to step up the review and assessment process at all national, regional and international levels to come to a common understanding of existing obstacles and emerging issues for child welfare in the twenty-first century, in order to determine appropriate future action.

My country supports a rights-based approach in our efforts to realize the goals of the World Summit for Children. Thus, it is vital for all States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to implement fully their obligations under the Convention. The assessment of the 10 years of implementation of the Convention should be an essential element in the preparations for the special session. We also call upon

States that have not ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

The welfare of children, however, cannot be promoted separately from a country's socio-economic development process. Therefore, my country is of the view that the review and assessment of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit at all levels, as well as the future actions to be defined by the special session, must be closely linked with socio-economic development policies. In view of the formidable challenges of globalization, especially for developing countries, it is highly important for us to find ways and means to build our capacity to sustain our hard-earned achievements in protecting and promoting our children's rights and welfare, and to move forward in the next centuries.

With a view to ensuring total success for the special session on children and for its follow-up, we support all efforts to find creative ways to mobilize constructive participation and contributions by all Member States, by the United Nations system, by other international organizations and by all other relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the Plan of Action and preparing for the special session.

Viet Nam supports the draft resolution before the General Assembly this year under item 42 and will work cooperatively in the preparatory process leading to the special session on children.

Mr. Leiro (Norway): The preparations for the 2001 special session of the General Assembly to follow up the World Summit for Children are now well under way. Many important events have taken place that have contributed significantly to the preparations for the special session, and many more are planned for the next 10 months. It is particularly exciting to note all the activities taking place in the various regions. However, much work remains to be done as we enter the final months of preparation.

The national reports are an important component of the preparatory process. Those reports will serve as input for the Secretary-General's report to the special session. National reports should also be used by the Bureau and the Secretariat in formulating the outcome document. The first draft of the outcome document will be completed prior to the submission of the national reports. That means that the process of finalizing the outcome document must be sufficiently flexible to

allow for the inclusion of any new relevant information from national reports.

But the preparation of national reports is a valuable process in own right. It allows each Member State to take stock of its own progress in fulfilling the goals of the World Summit for Children. That in turn facilitates the translation of the outcome document into national strategies and plans of action. Norway looks forward to receiving the first draft of the outcome document, which should be ready shortly.

The views and requests voiced at the substantive Preparatory Committee meeting are nicely summarized in the Secretary-General's report on the state of preparations for the special session. Norway would like to join others in reiterating that the outcome document should be innovative, concise and action-oriented. It is important that the document be one that we can commit ourselves to with the same motivation and enthusiasm that was displayed at the World Summit for Children.

The outcome document should build on the results of the World Summit for Children by addressing the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the goals established in 1990. It should also take into consideration the challenges that have emerged since then. This includes rising rates of poverty and disparity, the proliferation of conflicts and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Greater attention also needs to be given to addressing violations of children's rights.

The outcome document must be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It must address the principles underpinning the Convention, including the best interests of the child, children's participation and non-discrimination. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is also an important tool for ensuring that girls and women are not discriminated against.

Resolution 54/93 invited all relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to participate actively in the preparations for the special session. The Executive Director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy, invited all relevant United Nations organizations to contribute to the Secretary-General's report. These contributions are very valuable for the preparatory process.

The participation of the various United Nations organizations should not, however, be limited to providing input to the Secretary-General's report. Their

input is necessary throughout the preparatory process, including comments on the outcome document and active participation in the Preparatory Committee meetings. They should also actively participate in the special session itself. This will ensure that the United Nations approach to addressing children's rights is a coordinated one and that the whole United Nations family feels responsible for following up the outcome document.

The participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society has been an important issue throughout the preparatory process. We have established an open and inclusive process which has given us the support of a wide variety of NGOs and civil society organizations. Norway commends this initiative and encourages continuous active participation on the part of NGOs and civil society organizations.

Much has been said to date about the participation of children and youth, both in the preparatory process and in the special session itself. Participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children have a right to voice an opinion on issues affecting them and to have those opinions heard. The issues raised during preparations for the special session, and at the special session itself, will have a direct impact on the well-being of children. It is important, therefore, that children and young people be given the chance to voice their opinions and to be heard as part of this process.

The debate is very much alive on how to facilitate the participation of children and youth. This debate should certainly continue, but it must not get in the way of actually facilitating children's participation. Norway encourages all Member States to ensure the participation of children and young people at the local, national and global levels, both in the preparatory process and at the special session itself.

Finally, although our focus is now on the successful implementation of the special session for children, we must not view this as an end in itself. On the contrary, it is the beginning of our continuous efforts to ensure the well-being of children throughout the world. Let us take on the challenge of breaking the cycle of poverty in one generation by committing ourselves to ensuring that children are given a good start in life, good-quality basic education, and a safe and empowering adolescence.

Mr. Ocaziones (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ten years after the holding of the World Summit for Children and the achievement of the most-ratified human rights instrument in history for the protection of children, we are finding that many of the promises made in that framework have not been kept.

Nonetheless, during the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children, we will have a unique opportunity to assess our achievements, review the lessons learned, and, above all, to give fresh impetus to the alliances that will allow us to meet the challenge of moving from words to action.

The first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session, held from 30 May to 2 June of this year, made clear the obstacles encountered in the 1990s to the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and it also addressed various emerging issues related to children.

We have noted progress in areas such as perinatal mortality, immunization, oral rehydration and micro-nutrition. We are encouraged by the success of the Convention with respect to the monitoring of international commitments, and by the existence of legal instruments to protect minors, such as the Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the two optional protocols thereto.

Nonetheless, we also face great challenges — the AIDS pandemic, maternal mortality, difficulties in the area of education, problems in expanding the supply of drinking water, and achieving improved health conditions.

In addition, there is an urgent need to strengthen the protection of minors, especially those in difficult circumstances. I would mention in particular minors who are victims of armed conflict, of anti-personnel mines or of international trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, and also those minors who are affected by drug addiction or domestic violence.

We must be aware of a harsh reality that has been a factor in non-compliance with the commitments undertaken at the Summit: the fundamental obstacle represented by the situation of poverty. Our efforts will have to focus on breaking the vicious circle of poverty, as was recently recognized by our leaders at the Millennium Summit.

According to the annual report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at least 600 million children and adolescents are growing up in families that are struggling to survive on under \$1 a day. Poverty in developing countries causes the death of 11 million children under the age of 5, mostly from preventable diseases. Poverty is also clear when children do not attend school or receive a poor-quality education, when they work in dangerous jobs and when their families succumb to domestic violence.

In our opinion, the goals set at the World Summit for Children should be updated, with realistic indicators that take this factor into account and that allow all of us to mobilize strategic alliances at the intergovernmental level, in the United Nations system and in civil society. These alliances should help us to obtain an increase in resources and to make more effective use of the resources already available to combat poverty and to offer universal access to basic services. To achieve the goals of official development assistance, greater attention is required from donors.

In this context, we consider it appropriate to support the three-objective strategy proposed by UNICEF in order to break the cycle of poverty in a lasting manner, beginning with improvements in the quality of life of children and giving priority to three factors: first, that children should get a good start in life; secondly, that they should all have an opportunity to complete a basic education of good quality; and, thirdly, that adolescents should have an opportunity to fully develop their capacities.

These criteria can be complemented by the agreements reached during the process leading to next year's special session. They can also be given impetus by the results of the regional conferences, which have the advantage of adapting universally established goals to local realities. In this regard, we enthusiastically welcome the ministerial meetings held in Jamaica this year and in Peru last year, in the Latin American region. We also have great expectations of the results of the Ibero-American summit of heads of State and Government to be held in Panama in December, whose principal topic will be the situation of children.

Ms. Pearson (Canada): Over the last few months, calls to turn words into deeds on behalf of children have been intensifying, and I am happy to say that Canada has been taking up this challenge.

In September, Canada hosted the International Conference on War-affected Children, where representatives of Governments, the United Nations and its relevant agencies, members of civil society and young people themselves demonstrated a resolve to work in this area. It is Canada's hope that the Agenda for War-affected Children, agreed to by 130 Governments and circulated as a document (A/55/467, annex) of the General Assembly, will contribute to the special session preparatory process and that the outcome document of the special session will reflect the international community's commitment to action in this area.

Last month, Canada participated in the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Kingston, Jamaica. This meeting served as the regional preparatory meeting for the special session on children and provided an opportunity for the 37 participating Governments to reaffirm their commitment to children.

Canada's involvement in these two meetings underscores the priority we place on contributing to and facilitating dialogue on the rights of children, and we would encourage such dialogues to continue in the months ahead.

Canada would like to emphasize the importance we attach to safeguarding the rights of children in especially difficult circumstances. The list of these circumstances is unfortunately a long one and reflects how much remains to be done for the world's children. Among these particularly vulnerable children are street-involved children, child labourers, children who are sexually exploited and trafficked, children with disabilities, and children in conflict with the law or in the care of the State. Refugees and internally displaced children, minority and indigenous children and war-affected children are also in need of special protection.

With respect to war-affected children, in addition to actions taken at the International Conference on War-affected Children, Canada has signed and ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We would encourage all States that have not already done so to sign, ratify and implement these tools for the protection of children and for the ending of impunity for those who violate their rights in times of armed conflict.

Children are also victims of trafficking, preyed upon by organized criminal groups. Canada was pleased to participate in the successful conclusion of negotiations on the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols, on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. These are important new tools to address heinous abuses of children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of young people to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them. The Convention also requires that States make certain that children's opinions are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. For this reason, Canada is an active proponent of the participation of children and youth in meetings focused on young people. We welcomed and facilitated the dynamic, meaningful participation of young delegates at the September Conference on War-affected Children and also at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Jamaica.

In Winnipeg, 50 young people, including children from war-affected regions, were able to contribute to both the expert and the ministerial segments of the conference. They have committed themselves to their own follow-up activities on behalf of war-affected children.

In Kingston, Jamaica, some 120 children and youth from the Americas attended the meeting as members of national delegations or with the support of non-governmental organizations. The Canadian delegation included two youth participants, who acted as co-chairs of a thematic workshop organized by Canada on the issue of child and youth participation. Our two youth delegates also lent their expertise to Canadian negotiators working on the outcome document.

The successful involvement of children and youth in such meetings only serves to reinforce our conviction that the active participation of young people is critical to developing strategies to address the issues that affect them. We once again invite those Governments that have not already done so to include young people as members of their delegations in both the preparatory process and the special session itself.

For the outcome document of the special session, Canada is in favour of a short and focused political declaration followed by a set of clear, appropriate and measurable goals. While we set goals for certain

specific actions for child survival, protection and development at the 1990 World Summit for Children, additional goals to address obstacles and emerging issues will require extra effort and commitment. The attainment of these goals will require the efforts of Governments, civil society and children and youth themselves. We would like to take this opportunity to express our support for the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund to engage members of civil society in this process.

In closing, I reaffirm Canada's commitment to the preparatory process for the special session. Our national consultations with civil society and with children and youth are well under way, as are Government-wide preparations. It is our hope that the special session will spur concrete action for children and that all over the world countries will be turning words into deeds.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to inform members of an addition to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

On Monday, 20 November 2000, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 51, "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)" as the first item.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

63rd plenary meeting

Wednesday, 15 November 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 42 (continued)

Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Report of the Preparatory Committee (A/55/43 (Parts I and II))

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/429)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.34)

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): The commitment and dedication of the Philippines to our children and to the promotion of child welfare and development, and the importance it attaches to this subject, find expression in our most fundamental law. Enshrined in our Constitution is a peremptory directed to the State to defend the rights of the child — from the right to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, to the right to special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development. This is a statement of Philippine law and policy that found further meaning upon our signing and prompt legislative ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

But, while we stand at the threshold of unprecedented global growth and technology-driven progress, we still face the tragic spectre of children

going through indescribable suffering. In areas of conflict, children continue to be recruited and thrown into battle. Their fragile bodies have been held up to stop bullets. Millions of them have been killed, maimed or orphaned as a result of war and conflict. Those who have survived suffer deep psychological scars. Children continue to experience all kinds of abuse, from trafficking to the exploitation of their labour. This reality mirrors an image of complacency, neglect and heartlessness that does not say much for our efforts to provide care and protection and to improve their lives.

We took a step in the right direction when many of us signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The President of the Republic of the Philippines reaffirmed our commitment to the rights of the child when he signed these two Protocols during the Millennium Summit. The Philippines welcomes these Protocols, because they contain policies that our country has already adopted, including raising the minimum age for recruitment to military service to 18, as well as preventing participation in hostilities by individuals under the age of 18. In addition, we have criminalized violations of the rights of children in the context of the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography.

The Philippines believes that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children is an important opportunity to take stock of where we are in improving the lives of children and in building a better and brighter future for them. We will participate actively in the preparations,

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as well as in the follow-up conference itself. We hope that the outcome of the follow-up conference will not only provide policy directions but will also contain proposals for concrete actions to create a better world and offer our children a brighter future.

The Philippines would like to suggest that, in addition to what we already have before us, we should consider other elements to be included in the agenda of the follow-up conference in its preparatory meetings. First, we would like to include the issue of early childhood care and development. We believe that early childhood care and development provide children with a good start in life. The care that a child gets in his or her early years plays a critical role in the child's total development, as well as in his or her future well-being as an adult. We must also seriously consider the need to provide children with special protection. Special protection is a vital part of efforts to uphold the rights of children. Survival, development and participation are essential rights of children; however, these rights will not be exercised if children are not protected from abuse and exploitation.

We must also ensure, as we promote the rights of the child, that we hear the voice of the child. Children's participation in matters affecting them is increasingly becoming a trend in the area of their rights. When children become aware of the plight and problems of other children, they become part of the solution and not of the problem.

Mr. Pradhan (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Children are close to the hearts of each and every Filipino family and Philippine society. For their sake and the sake of all children in this world, let us all call on our leaders, who time and again say that today's children will be the leaders of the future, to sign and ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments that offer the promise of a better world for all children.

We must also welcome and support the many activities of the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which bring relief, succour and hope to suffering children all over the world, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

Everything else that we achieve in this world will be less meaningful if we are unable to care for our children and for their future. We must renew our efforts and put a stop to all unconscionable acts of inhumanity and build a better and brighter world for our children.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the state of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Like many others, I am pleased to note that substantive preparations are under way at the national, regional and international levels. As can be seen from the report, the Preparatory Committee is successfully carrying out the important tasks assigned to it, in particular to prepare a draft outcome document for the special session.

The appeal made by world leaders at the 1990 World Summit for Children to give every child a better future resulted in the adoption of two major documents: the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for its implementation. The appeal was universally accepted, and relevant measures to implement it have been undertaken throughout the world.

Nevertheless, recent reports indicate that, despite those achievements, progress has been uneven in different regions and within different countries. Thus, the *Human Development Report 2000* states that today some 90 million children are out of school at the primary level and that more than 30,000 children die every day from mainly preventable causes. Therefore, there should be no doubt that both renewed commitment and definition of specific areas of future action are the major challenges for the next decade.

As we all enter the new millennium, we need to jointly identify the most effective ways of ensuring appropriate conditions for the protection and development of our children. The World Summit's goals need to be updated and its achievements sustained. Most importantly, the gap between children's legal rights and their actual rights in practice should be narrowed and eliminated. To ensure this, as was rightly pointed out at the Preparatory Committee's panel discussions, appropriate policy, budget and institutional reforms should be instituted in all countries. My delegation fully shares the view that the

future agenda for children to be adopted at the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly should be innovative, concise and action-oriented. For its part, Mongolia will continue its efforts to ensure the all-round development of children and to actively participate in and make its own contribution to this global endeavour.

Issues related to children, to their development and to the protection and promotion of the rights of children are of particular importance for my country, where children and youth constitute an overwhelming majority of the population. Over the past years, consistent efforts have been made by the Government of Mongolia to ensure broader access to health services and education for all children and to mobilize resources to fully implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the goals of the World Summit.

Much has been accomplished within the framework of the National Programme of Action for the Development of Children, adopted in 1993. In order to draw the attention and efforts of society to child-related issues, the National Summit on Child Protection and Development was organized in 1995. While 1995 was observed as the National Year for Children, 1996 was declared the National Year for Education and over 20 per cent of the national budget was allocated to education alone. In May 1996, the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child was adopted. As a result of the efforts of the Government, the mortality rates for infants and children under five have decreased by 3.5 times and 2.7 times, respectively, in terms of the number of related deaths between 1991 and 1997.

However, it should be recognized that further efforts and concerted actions are needed at the national level to reach the goals of the World Summit. As the country is still grappling with transitional difficulties, the growing number of street children and school drop-outs raises serious concern. Infant and under-five mortality are still high. Thus, according to figures from the National Statistical Office, in 1998 infant and under-five mortality rates were at 35.4 and 47.8 per 1,000 live births, respectively. Moreover, we have to deal with such newly emerging social ills as suicide, especially among adolescents, prostitution and alcohol and tobacco abuse in order to comprehensively address the complex issues facing children today.

The Labour Law sets the minimum working age and maximum working hours for all. Children under 16 are not permitted to work. Those under 18 are prohibited from doing arduous work and from working in dangerous areas such as mineshafts. However, according to a recent survey, child labour is becoming an issue that needs coherent state policy and control, an improved legal framework and concrete preventive actions on the part of the State. Among the most recent actions undertaken in this regard, I wish to single out the recent ratification by the Mongolian Parliament of International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

In its efforts to ensure a better life for future generations, the Government of Mongolia actively cooperates with international organizations, other Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Among these, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) plays an important role. The Fund is working in close cooperation with our national counterparts, other United Nations bodies – such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization – and NGOs to provide community-based services in primary health care, nutrition, basic education, child and family welfare, safe water and sanitation. Thus, the current 1997-2001 Mongolia-UNICEF Country Programme has 13 ongoing projects related to child health and nutrition. I am also pleased to underscore that the visit of UNICEF's Executive Director, Ms. Bellamy, to Mongolia last year was important in expanding further the cooperation with UNICEF. Shortly after her visit, a mid-term review of the Country Programme was undertaken. Its recommendations highlighted the importance of ensuring an integrated implementation of many ongoing programmes, projects for children and coherent interaction between various organizations that act on behalf and for children.

I wish to inform the Assembly that the year 2000 is being observed in Mongolia as the National Year for Child Development. It is a manifestation of Mongolia's strong political commitment to improving the situation of children. Within the framework of the Year, a national review of the progress achieved since the World Summit is being undertaken so as to map out specific recommendations for the future, including the elaboration of the next national programme of action for the development of children up to 2010. This

programme will be carried out in line with the global preparations for the special session of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's support for the draft resolution submitted for our consideration and to reiterate its determination to actively participate both in the preparatory process and in the special session next year.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the state of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

On behalf of the Pakistan delegation, I would like to convey our appreciation to the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, for effectively leading the work of the Bureau and the Committee. We are confident that her personal commitment to the cause of children will make the General Assembly special session a singular success.

As one of the initiator countries for the World Summit for Children held in 1990, Pakistan has an abiding commitment to the effective realization of the goals of the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit. We believe that the special session in 2001 will provide us with an opportunity to galvanize political commitment to the implementation of the unfinished agenda of the Summit.

The World Summit for Children was instrumental in placing the issues of children in the centre of the development activities of the international community. The Plan of Action adopted by the Summit stipulated specific and quantifiable goals to be achieved within a decade. Despite the obvious shortfalls, progress towards the realization of these goals has been encouraging. In certain areas, significant strides have been made in achieving the targets of the World Summit for Children.

The near universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been an important factor in the achievement of these goals. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has played a central role by supporting the efforts of Member States for the implementation of their plans of action. Other agencies and non-governmental organizations have also contributed to promoting the well-being of children.

We would like to express our appreciation for their efforts in this regard.

Following the World Summit for Children, Pakistan formulated a national plan of action with goals for the year 2000. Considerable advances have been made in the realization of these goals and objectives. But further action is required in areas of better nutrition, basic education and education for the girl child.

The present Government is deeply committed not only to the realization of the goals of the Summit but also to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in its letter and spirit. The head of Government has also launched a national plan of action for the elimination of exploitative child labour. The juvenile justice system is being revamped in order to safeguard the rights and privileges of children.

Like Pakistan, many developing countries have launched major initiatives for the realization of the goals of the World Summit for Children. However, the pace of progress has been uneven. One of the major challenges facing us today is the need to eliminate deep disparities in the conditions and quality of life available to children of different regions of the world. In some of the countries of Africa, child mortality rates are one-third higher than those recorded at the beginning of the last decade. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia together account for three-fourths of all under-five deaths of children.

The goals for the development of children are deeply linked with the achievement of overall goals of development. It is widely acknowledged that progress in that area has been rather dismal. Despite the availability of unprecedented wealth in the global economy, more than 600 million children struggle to survive on less than one dollar a day. In almost 80 countries, per capita income is lower today than it was a decade ago.

Moreover, heavy external debt burden has seriously curtailed the ability of the developing countries to allocate sufficient resources to achieve the goals and objectives of the Summit. In the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC's), children are 10 times less likely to live up to the age of five than those in rich countries.

Reaching global goals for children was rendered even more difficult by declining levels of official development assistance (ODA). Without an alleviation of the debt burden and an increase in ODA, there is little likelihood that national policies can be fully implemented or that the goals of the Summit could be achieved anytime in the near future. We recognize the efforts being made to provide some relief to HIPC's. It seems, however, that only large-scale debt relief and debt cancellation would enable developing countries to allocate sufficient resources to the resolution of problems being faced by children. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to fulfil the 0.7 per cent of gross national product target for ODA. The negative effects of globalization, rising income disparities and increasing marginalization of developing countries should also be addressed by the special session.

A future agenda for children should include the unfinished agenda of the Summit. A good start in life has to be preceded by substantial reduction in child mortality rates. The goal of quality education has to be pursued in tandem with the objective of ensuring universal access to education. Opportunities for adolescents to fully realize their potentials need to be provided. But the critical role of parental guidance and family cannot be underestimated in the proper development of adolescents and children. In this context, cultural and social values must be respected.

We recognize the importance of building partnerships with non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors. The proposal to hold a special event or forum on the rights of the child deserves serious consideration. As far as the timing of the forum is concerned, it should be held at least three months prior to the special session. This would enable the Preparatory Committee to benefit from the proposals to be presented by the forum.

At the national level, we have established a national steering committee to coordinate national preparations for the special session, as well as for the national end-decade review. We hope that the national end-decade review report will be completed by the end of this year.

The present Government has also launched a major awareness-raising campaign regarding the United Nations General Assembly special session. A plan for the participation of children and youth in all national events is also being drawn up in consultation

with the relevant organizations. A proposal for holding a meeting of experts from South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries on the subject of the girl child during the first quarter of next year is also under serious consideration. Modalities for arranging this meeting are being explored with UNICEF.

Thorough preparations hold the key to the success of the special session. We thank the Government of Canada for hosting the International Conference on War-Affected Children last September and all other Governments that have arranged or plan to organize regional or global meetings in preparation for the General Assembly special session. Global and regional meetings would provide us with the necessary inputs required to identify the areas where further action is needed to implement the Plan of Action.

The biggest challenge however is to translate the documents adopted by these meetings into action. The success of the General Assembly special session will be measured by its impact on the revitalization of international efforts to promote the implementation of the Plan of Action. We urge the international community to build a new partnership to provide the necessary political will and impetus to save our children from the scourge of hunger, war, death, disease and exploitation. In a world of unprecedented prosperity, it is unconscionable that so many children are suffering so grievously. We should make every effort to save our children.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The item we are discussing today, "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow up to the World Summit for Children", is of primary importance among matters of concern to the entire world.

By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 23 July 1990, my country showed how important this issue is for us and demonstrated its commitment to the cause of promoting and protecting the rights of the child.

In light of the Convention and the Plan of Action for the ten years from 1990 to 2000, Burkina Faso, in December 1991, adopted a national plan of action for children whose implementation, follow-up and assessment have all been entrusted to a national committee.

Furthermore, several other legislative measures have also been adopted always out of concern for better

ensuring the well-being of our children. For instance, the code relative to the person and the family, adopted in December 1989, set down as its main principle the equality of all children, whatever the origin of their birth. It also made obligatory registering the child at the registry office in the first two months of life, so that it has an identity in the eyes of the State. And, under the new criminal code, adopted in November 1996 and promulgated in December 1996, in addition to the old crimes against minors such as kidnapping or infanticide, certain traditional practices recognized as harmful, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation, are now also classified as crimes.

As far as implementation is concerned, a district for children has been built in Ouagadougou and the Burkina Faso educational system is experimenting more and more with satellite schools.

As can be seen, even though much has been done over these last few years to improve the legal and social status and situation of children, unfortunately it has to be said that there are many children in Burkina Faso who still face problems of health and malnutrition and who are not in school, all of which prevent them from developing their full potential. This presents real challenges and obstacles that seriously handicap our development.

Not only are there these negative effects, but to them must be added the incalculable consequences of AIDS, as well as the proliferation of armed conflicts, where children, the most vulnerable group, are the first victims.

In order to counter all these major obstacles and in order to implement the rights of the child, all countries, especially developing countries, should continue with their legal, political and economic reforms.

At the legal level, if they have not yet done so, it is important, as stated in the Millennium Declaration, that they should encourage the ratification and comprehensive implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as its optional protocols, which concern children in armed conflicts, trafficking in children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Politically and economically, policies and strategies for development must stress — possibly as their first priority — getting children into school and

making sure that every child has at least a basic primary education. At the moment, it is estimated that some 100 million children in the world are not in school. This is intolerable and it is hard to understand, as we stand on the threshold of a new Millennium. This situation must be corrected quickly in the years to come, if we are to avoid a widespread social cataclysm.

It is high time for us to stop thinking of education as something sterile or non-productive; we must recognize it as a real investment. The quality of our human resources is the essential factor on which all development is predicated and these human resources are the product of our educational system. That is why we must be aware of the need and the urgency for directing financial resources to education — something to which our development partners must agree.

In this respect we must recognize the positive contribution that certain countries have made — those of the European Union, the Nordic countries and Canada — together with certain international organizations, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in its concern for the well-being of children, particularly in Africa. These efforts are greatly appreciated by all who benefit from them. I have only to mention the countries which have faced wars — Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, among others — for it to be seen how much UNICEF has done to provide humanitarian aid for children. In certain natural disasters — such as in Mozambique or Madagascar last year — once again UNICEF went in and reopened the schools.

The World Food Programme has also provided various vital operational activities such as, for instance, providing \$37 million to promote basic education in sub-Saharan Africa. Together with the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Food Programme is now helping 15 African countries to improve the rates of schooling.

Burkina Faso hopes that the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, which will take place in 2001, will take very important decisions to support children in the form of a plan of action for the coming ten years. Let us make sure that these decisions are adequate to face the many challenges that stand before the international community in this area of our activities.

May I take this opportunity to thank in advance the Preparatory Committee, as well as UNICEF, for their support to many regional activities which form part of the preparation for the special session and for all the coordinating and implementing work they have done to provide information on the progress of the preparatory process.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): The World Summit for Children was a turning point in the history of social development and indeed, by all accounts, a landmark event. Not only did that meeting set substantial comprehensive targets in the field of child health and welfare, but, unlike so many other development ventures by the international community, those targets were being realized. Child mortality was being reduced, along with the needless suffering caused by disease that could be, and was, prevented.

The World Summit for Children was of critical importance in several respects, not least of which was the focused attention it brought, and has sustained, to the development needs of children and the moral responsibility of the international community to meet those needs. Our continued appreciation is extended to the six initiating Governments for the vision they displayed in calling for the Summit.

In the intervening years since the World Summit for Children was convened, the world has truly undergone change and made advances that were largely unforeseen. Globalization has come to provide the context for much of international relations, democracy has taken root in many countries and advances in information technology have further reduced the barriers between nations and peoples. Indeed, for some countries the past decade has been one of untold prosperity and progress. Yet some realities have not changed and remain as prevalent today as ever. Children are still the most vulnerable members of society, and they demand our protection, nurturing and support. Poverty remains the greatest challenge we face as we seek to enhance the development, welfare and protection of children throughout the world. If I may recall the words of Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in his address to the Summit,

"Hunger, disease, illiteracy, despair — these constitute the enemy's fearful train."
(SG/SM/4496)

How relevant these words remain today.

As we prepare for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, we will renew our commitments and have occasion to consider future actions for children over the next 10 years. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/55/429, on the state of the preparations being made towards convening that session. In that regard, allow me also to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, and to all members of the Preparatory Committee for their tireless efforts.

Indonesia supports the work being undertaken by the Preparatory Committee in its preparation of a draft outcome document for the special session, and we are confident that the operational strategies will further advance the situation of children and result in practical and measurable results. Indonesia further agrees that the future agenda for children should be guided by the need to be innovative, concise and action-oriented, with a view to achieving a positive impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged.

Furthermore, in crafting the outcome document, we should also be aware of the many other targets that have been set as follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Conference, the Millennium Summit and other international conferences. Targets have been set for poverty eradication, education, food security and in other fields, and these should be reflected and supported in the forthcoming special session. In this connection, we would agree with the statement in the Secretary-General's report on this item that more emphasis should be placed on combating diseases that take a high toll on children.

In approaching the special session, my delegation would like to recall the fact that child mortality rates remain unacceptably high and that more needs to be done in addressing malnutrition, maternal mortality and basic education. There is clearly a need for increased intervention in these areas by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Governments. Let us also recall that enhanced children's health and nutrition is a primary duty and a task for which solutions, we believe, are now within reach.

Let me also comment on the progress that has been made and that has already made a great change in

the lives of so many. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has now achieved near universal acceptance, which shows the importance that the international community attaches to the welfare and interests of children. Likewise, the adoption of the two Optional Protocols shows the growing commitment to all aspects of child safety. The special session will afford yet another opportunity for us to assess the positive impact of the Convention.

In the years immediately following the World Summit for Children, Indonesia made considerable progress in implementing the Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children. We had registered significant achievements in child immunization and the provision of clean water and improved sanitation, and, importantly, the poverty rate in Indonesia had been reduced and was continuing to drop. Now, as we approach the 10-year anniversary of that Summit, an economic crisis has all but eliminated much of the progress that was achieved and has had a broad effect on the welfare of children in Indonesia.

This situation has gravely affected the Government's efforts to meet the goals set at the World Summit for Children and will certainly have an impact on the achievement of future goals. I will say, however, that political reformation has brought renewed hope for the protection and development of children, and the Government maintains a strong commitment to doing what it can with what it has.

In that regard, Indonesia is implementing programmes to tackle those situations that can be characterized as emergencies through its social safety net. Nevertheless, we are not in a position to undertake all that needs to be done, and international assistance, in particular from UNICEF, is very important if we are to strengthen our national capacity to fulfil the Summit goals and those of the special session. The Government of Indonesia will continue to work within its means to meet its solemn obligations and, where possible, to support the efforts of the international community.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): At its fifty-fourth session the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/93, of 7 December 1999, entitled "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children". This resolution scheduled the special session for September 2001 and, among other things, established an open-ended Preparatory Committee for the special session.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that, in keeping with the provisions of the resolution, the Preparatory Committee has since commenced its work, convening an organizational session from 7-8 February 2000 and a substantive session from 30 May to 2 June 2000.

My delegation also notes the decisions adopted at the end of the first substantive session, which, among other things, address the following: holding two more substantive sessions in 2001 to enable the Committee to provide more input into the preparatory process; the participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process; and convening the special session in the month of September 2001. These are all important decisions which, in the view of the Nigerian delegation, would greatly facilitate the convening of the special session.

We therefore commend the Preparatory Committee for the excellent work it has done so far. We trust that Member States will continue to actively participate in the work of the Committee as it proceeds with the implementation of the remaining portion of its programme of work. In that connection, we pay tribute to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy, the entire staff of the Organization, and other United Nations agencies for their excellent role in the ongoing preparations aimed at ensuring the success of the special session. We urge them not to relent in those efforts.

The first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session gave Member States a good opportunity to reaffirm their resolve to accord foremost priority to children's rights, as agreed during the World Summit for Children in 1990. It also presented Member States with the opportunity to formulate future actions for children that are based on the commitments made by world leaders during the World Summit. Undoubtedly, new issues concerning children are emerging in the new century, issues that were not envisaged 10 years ago.

The major challenges that have emerged and continue to impinge on the rights and welfare of children include the deepening of poverty and inequality; the proliferation of conflicts and the consequent spread of violence; the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the persistence of discrimination, particularly against the girl child. A

total of 3.8 million children are said to have died of AIDS, while 13 million more children have been orphaned by the disease — and the number may reach 40 million before the end of the decade. The disease is devastating to families and is tearing apart the very fabric of society. It strikes the most productive age group, disrupting vital sectors of the economy. There is no doubt whatsoever that robust and effective action will be required at the national, regional and international levels to deal with these issues, if the aims and objectives of the Declaration adopted in 1990 are to be fully realized.

Children in developing countries are the worst hit by the challenges posed by the issues that have emerged since the World Summit for Children in 1990. In that connection, the call by resolution 45/217, of 21 December 1990, for international solidarity in support of developing countries in their pursuit of the goals of the World Summit, needs to be fully implemented by Member States.

One vital area that the special session needs to address is the issue of children and armed conflict. It is reassuring that the Security Council is seized with the problems arising from children in armed conflict. We believe, however, that the international community needs to be more forceful in bringing to justice all those who commit war crimes, particularly against children, which would no doubt serve as a deterrent to potential perpetrators of those heinous crimes. It is equally important to address the issue of trafficking in children for the purposes of slavery and prostitution. Measures should be adopted at international, regional and national levels to deter traffickers by ensuring that penalties reflect the gravity of the offence.

Notwithstanding the difficulties posed by the major challenges, developing countries have made some remarkable progress with regard to the situation of the world's children. In 1992 Nigeria adopted a national plan of action in pursuit of the goals of the World Summit. Among other things, the national plan of action is aimed at evolving new initiatives in the areas of health, nutrition, water, environmental sanitation and education. The plan of action has since become the blueprint for collaboration with the United Nations and some of its specialized agencies, such as UNICEF.

Over the years, successive Nigerian Governments have also taken bold steps towards further

implementation of the goals of the World Summit. Those steps include reinvigoration of the social sector through a number of women- and children-specific programmes and projects; hosting a world conference on the Roll Back Malaria Initiative — concerning a disease which is responsible every year for the death of numerous children — especially in Africa; adoption of a robust poverty alleviation programme; active promotion of gender equality and positive gender relations; establishment of national and State-level task forces on the girl child; and a commitment to the eradication of polio.

Those efforts are not exhaustive. They are complemented by the actions taken since Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1991. Those actions include the establishment of recognized institutional mechanisms and a framework for articulating children's issues; the establishment of national and State child-rights implementation and monitoring committees; the articulation of a legal framework for the protection of children; relaunching the national programme on immunization nation-wide; the harnessing of the potential of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the community; and the signing of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely, that on the involvement of children in armed conflict and that on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The present Administration has also recently launched the universal basic education and national rebirth programme, designed to improve the lives of Nigerian children and orient them to nation-building and development.

In addition to assessing the achievements of the goals of the Declaration adopted by world leaders in 1990, the special session will, my delegation believes, afford us all an opportunity to tackle the unfinished business pertaining to the world's children. It will also enable us to address the lessons that have emerged in the last decade. It should be recalled that heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit in September agreed that by 2015 boys and girls alike should be able to complete primary school and should have equal access to all levels of education. They also resolved to reduce, by the same date, maternal mortality by three quarters, and under-five mortality by two thirds.

The special session should therefore be aimed at setting bold objectives, updating targets and renewing

strategies to guide international cooperation and country-level action in regard to children. It is our hope that the outcome document will contain a political declaration reaffirming the commitments made during the World Summit for Children. The declaration should be concise and action-oriented. The document should reflect the progress achieved so far on child survival, protection and development. It should also address the obstacles that have militated against the full realization of the goals of the World Summit at the national, regional and international levels. Above all, the special session must lead to enhanced mobilization of resources — human, financial and technological — for child development, and should call on relevant players, including Member States, international organizations, international financial institutions and NGOs, to actively contribute towards the implementation of identifiable goals.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Ten years ago, the leaders of the world came together at the World Summit for Children and jointly committed themselves to giving every child a better future. Now, as we set out on the follow-up of the Summit, we remember Jim Grant, the conceiver and architect of what was a pioneering global summit for the United Nations system. His vision and masterful advocacy were instrumental in many of the meaningful programmes of the last decade.

Definite progress was made over the past 10 years. Millions of lives were saved; many afflictions were reduced; more children were put to school, often for a longer period of learning; and many children had better opportunities to fulfil their potential. We in Bangladesh have made every effort to keep our promises to children, thus improving their lives in most areas. We have also joined forerunner countries in ratifying the two recent Optional Protocols relating to children.

The World Summit for Children gave rise to a global movement that led to the world's most ratified human rights instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its vision is based on the firm conviction that the best interests of children should always come first. It provides the tools to promote the rights of children worldwide, along with improving their survival, protection and development.

Much progress has been achieved in practice and in principle. But still, the goals agreed upon at the 1990

Summit remain largely unattained. There are numerous challenges looming before us, many of them quite formidable. The number of people living in poverty, half of whom are children, is now greater than ever before. A fifth of the entire global population lives on less than a dollar a day. Poverty deprives the ability of parents and families to provide children with a setting where they can grow up in a safe, sound, secure and stable environment. The lives of countless children are blighted by crushing poverty; their potential is nipped in the bud by lack of opportunities; their rights remain unrealized owing to gross deprivation.

The spread of many deadly diseases continues unabated. Malnutrition is growing. Armed conflict and political instability are proliferating. Violence against children is being carried out with impunity. Child labour, in different degrees and all over the world, still defies control. Those are all challenges that we must confront with a resolute determination to overcome them. Incidentally, next year, when the special session will be held, is also the beginning of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, covering the period 2001 to 2010.

We have new opportunities and new tools to fight many of these challenges. We have the resources to put an end to much of this misery. We have the capacity to overcome most of these hurdles. We have new technologies to fight many diseases and afflictions. We have the know-how to ensure that the rights of children are protected.

The new approaches to development gained from increased understanding during the last decade have reinforced the conviction that efforts at ending poverty and exclusion must be guided by the values and principles of human rights and the rights of the child. In that context, I would like to emphasize that special attention should be accorded the needs of the girl child. A rights-based approach to development is the one to follow. The information and communication revolution has opened up new avenues for people to participate in development and in the protection of their rights.

We now have the normative framework to address the challenges comprehensively. But the singular challenge before us is to mobilize the political commitment of our leaders to invest in our common future. We need, through practical and concerted actions, to reach the goals and targets that we have set

for ourselves. Many goals and targets relevant to children were endorsed by the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s. There is international consensus on goals designed to reduce infant and under-five mortality and child malnutrition, to improve education and adult literacy, to achieve gender equality, to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and to protect children from HIV/AIDS, armed conflict, child labour, sexual exploitation and abuse. Those aims remain the cornerstone for our action to realize the rights of all children and adolescents.

We need to adopt a set of practical and convincing strategies for attaining the goals in their projected time-frames. We will need to forge new partnerships with civil society organizations, the private sector, the media and children themselves. Family and community participation must be promoted.

We will need to work to reduce disparities within and among societies. We will need to ensure that laws exist and to strengthen them so that the rights of children are protected. We will need to improve the effectiveness of the mechanisms to monitor child rights. Partnerships should be strengthened with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations around shared concerns of child rights and women's rights. Their active participation in the special session and their involvement in the preparatory process can only add value to intergovernmental efforts. All multilateral and bilateral development agencies should contribute to the attainment of the various goals and targets. The United Nations Children's Fund, as the lead agency most involved with issues related to children, has a special role in the coordination, follow-up, monitoring and review of the whole process.

Adequate resources must be made available to translate the principal obligations of the Convention of the Rights of the Child into practical reality. Legal, administrative, economic and social measures must be undertaken to allocate available resources to ensure the realization of child rights and to monitor the progress achieved.

In September next year we will have a special session of the General Assembly for follow-up of the 1990 World Summit for Children. We believe that many of the issues I touched upon today should be addressed forcefully in discussions relating to the special session.

We applaud in particular Ambassador Patricia Durrant's able leadership and guidance in her role as the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee of the special session on children. As a member of the Bureau, it has been my privilege to work closely with her during the preparatory process. We look forward to working closely and constructively with other delegations for a focused and action-oriented outcome of the special session.

We joined in sponsoring the draft resolution on this item because of our total and continuing commitment to the cause of children. We hope that the draft resolution will receive the widest possible support of the Assembly, through adoption by consensus.

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): South Africa supports and welcomes the introduction and proposed adoption of draft resolution A/55/L.34, relating to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, and entitled "Preparations for the special session on children".

Considering the time constraints — the special session on children is a mere nine months away — my delegation believes we must carry out the preparatory process in the most efficient and inclusive manner. South Africa will do its utmost to ensure the success of the special session.

It might be asked what is so special about the General Assembly session for the follow-up on the World Summit for Children, to be held in September 2001. First, we must go back to the 1990 World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, and recall its goals. At the same time, we will have to review and evaluate whether we achieved the goals of the World Summit for Children, particularly the Declaration's appeal to give every child a better future.

Secondly, as Member States we will have to factor in the Millennium Summit Declaration, which calls for increased development for and protection of children. Thirdly, the special session will present an extraordinary opportunity for government leaders, non-governmental organizations, children's advocates and youth and child representatives themselves to hold a dialogue and agree on new emerging issues and commit themselves to changing the way the world views and treats children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, laid the foundation for the implementation of policies and programmes for every person under 18 years of age. However, its universal ratification has not been translated into universal application. Reports submitted by the Secretary-General, the United Nations Children's Fund and related agencies since the World Summit for Children in 1990, bear testimony to the fact that children's rights are not always guaranteed and protected. In all countries, in every region, our Governments have been working extensively to ensure that children are protected from all forms of exploitation. Yet, in many parts of the world, some children still do not enjoy fundamental freedoms and inherent rights, such as family care and protection; basic nutrition and education; basic health and social services; protection from armed conflict; and protection from abusive practices.

From a regional perspective, the regeneration of Africa — the African renaissance — seeks, among other objectives, to reassert our children's rightful place in the spectrum of global diversity. Their dignity and self-worth must be fully restored. The promotion and implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is a region-specific tool for us in this regard.

Education and achievement, with an emphasis on gender equity, particularly for the girl child, is another key to future human development. The World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, adopted a Framework for Action, committing Governments to achieving quality basic education for all. Particular emphasis was placed on girls' education, and donor countries and institutions gave a pledge that no country seriously committed to basic education will be prevented from achieving that goal as a result of a lack of resources. While recognizing that there has been significant progress in many countries, it is not acceptable that more than 113 million children, most of them girls, have no access to primary education. Gender discrimination continues to permeate education systems, and the quality of learning falls short of the needs of societies.

South Africa takes seriously the education of its children as one of the primary goals of development. As such, with the advent of democracy in 1994, a number of initiatives were undertaken by my Government to address challenges inherited from the

previous regime. A national education framework supported by constitutional imperatives was set up to ensure that South Africa, in its quest to educate its citizens, would never resort to a system of education that discriminated against its citizens.

My delegation would like to suggest to the Assembly that the agenda for the special session focus on, among other issues, the need for immediate action to confront the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on children. The containment of HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening infectious diseases must be confronted in partnership with the rest of the world. We have to recognize and deal with its devastating effects in destroying many lives and making orphans of millions of children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and the pandemic's potential threat to all of humanity. The lack of affordable medical intervention should be addressed with urgency; so should efforts aimed at lessening the risk factors associated with mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, we should address the challenge of globalization and how it affects the ability of countries to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children and the objectives of the special session on children. Creative ways have to be explored on how globalization can be harnessed to accelerate progress for children. The revolution in information and communication technology and the so-called digital divide have both positive and negative implications for children. The challenge is how to direct information technology's potential for good and how to ensure that the digital divide can be overcome to benefit developing countries. In particular, we must consider how children can use information technology in order to empower and uplift them in their daily lives and to prevent their marginalization from the rest of the world.

Other measures, such as the significant reduction in external debt, particularly in Africa, and the need to focus aid flows on the neediest economies, must be part of international action to support initiatives aimed at improving the status of children.

More resources and actions are needed to fight poverty and to provide access to basic services for all. At the national level, countries should allocate a higher proportion of their national budgets to basic social services, which benefit children, and greater efforts should be made to reduce child labour. South Africa

supports initiatives aimed at reducing and ultimately abolishing child labour. We ask the International Labour Organization (ILO) to continue its work aimed at eradicating the use of children in forced labour, for which they are easy prey. In this regard, my delegation can report that South Africa has been singled out by the ILO for its high-calibre investigation into child labour. The survey found that the worst forms of child labour were not common in South Africa. My Government will continue to enforce a zero-tolerance approach to child labour where it still exist in the country, especially on commercial farms.

Governments have the primary responsibility to ensure the social well-being of children and provide basic social services for children. The role of parents and family structures are critical, as is the increased collaboration of the private sector as part of their corporate social responsibility. Existing partnerships with non-governmental organizations and civil society should be enhanced.

One method of improving children's lives would be the expeditious ratification and full implementation by Member States of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Another method is commitment at the highest political level to improve the lives of children at the national, regional and international levels. From a national perspective, South Africa has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child without any reservations and submitted its national reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Our Constitution, furthermore, states that

"a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child".

Other areas which need evaluation, and which should remain priorities, are children's access to basic health services, safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and proper nutrition. The issue of exclusion and equal rights for all marginalized children who suffered from racial discrimination also needs attention, as does the need to alleviate the plight of refugee children and children affected by natural disasters.

The draft resolution recognizes the importance of the participation and active contribution of children

and youth, at all stages of their life cycle and in accordance with their evolving capacity, to the debate during our preparations and during the special session on children. My delegation believes this goal needs to be promoted.

It is our hope that the outcome documents and final agenda for children to be adopted by the special session will enjoy the consensus of all Member States. We hope that the final results will have universal relevance in addressing the situation of children in the industrialized and developing countries. They must emphasize the development of the whole child and the universality of child rights.

By investing in the life cycle of children we can change the course of human development. We should allow children to seize the right opportunities at the right moment, and resolve that our children will be the responsible leaders of tomorrow.

My delegation commends the mission of the United Nations Children's Fund to protect children's rights and to help meet their needs. Similarly, the work of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is highly appreciated.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that we must re-energize our commitment to realize a global vision for children. Let us also resolve to do what Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel did: to be at the service of the children of the world.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am very pleased to speak on behalf of Chile regarding the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children.

Chile's commitment to children and infants has found expression in efforts to decrease poverty, improve equity and increase access to opportunities through the school food programme, focus on preschooling in general and in particular for ethnic minorities, programmes to provide scholarships to children, school health programmes and so forth. One of the first measures adopted after Chile returned to democracy was the national law regarding the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 14 August 1990. This Convention constitutes a new ethical and legal framework which involves the State, social policies, boys and girls and their families, ranging from consideration of the needs of children to a doctrine of comprehensive protection

which considers children as individuals with full rights. Chile's commitment was demonstrated by its participation in the World Summit for Children, at which it undertook the task of drafting a national plan for children.

The actions of the Chilean State have focused on three central themes. The first is the refinement of existing sectoral social policies and the development of new programmes. The second is the gradual adaptation of national laws to bring them into line with the principles of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child and the creation of laws relating to children and adolescents. The third is the implementation of planning instruments for specific public policies and programmes for children.

The social policies affecting children have principally focused on education, health and justice. Education has been considered a key component for overcoming poverty and social vulnerability, and therefore resources have been mobilized to improve the quality of education through a fundamental reform of the Chilean education system — in methods of teaching and learning, time spent in the classroom and the contents of education, as well as the gradual and sustained improvement of the capacities and working conditions of teachers. This qualitative transformation of the education system will lead to substantial improvements in the education available to boys and girls in our country.

Prevention has been the priority for the activities focused on infants and adolescents by the Chilean health sector, and greater emphasis has been placed on monitoring the biological, psychological and social growth and development of boys and girls, so as to guarantee them a better quality of life. As an example of the progress achieved, more than 99 per cent of the children in Chile are born in maternity wards and receive professional care.

Similarly, in the justice sector there is a movement to reform the laws regarding families and minors, as well as to develop measures within the framework of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. These measures include the paternity law, which eliminates all forms of discrimination against children.

We must also stress the organization at the national level of the inter-ministerial working group on children and adolescents, which has the task of drafting

a national policy for children and adolescents, as part of a comprehensive plan of action for boys, girls and adolescents for 2001-2010, with some specific objectives to be evaluated and possibly achieved in 2005. Furthermore, we must mention the creation of a set of committees with specific thematic objectives: child labour, breast-feeding, preventing child abuse, preschool education and preventing drug addiction.

The following were among the principal milestones for children during the past decade. Certainly, the first was the participation by Chile — represented by the President of the Republic, Mr. Patricio Aylwin — in the World Summit for Children, held in September 1990 in New York, and Chile's ratification in the same year of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. The second was the elaboration, in 1992, of the national plan for children, the theme of which was goals and lines of action for children, commitment to the children of Chile. The third was the promulgation of laws that directly benefit children. Notable among them were the law on the adoption of minors, the law on family violence and the laws that authorize leave for parents of a sick child under one year old or a seriously ill child between one and 18 years old. Finally, there were public policies aimed at boys and girls below six years of age from low-income families, with special emphasis on the activities of the national kindergartens board to respond to the various special educational needs of children under six.

Locally, we have also developed policies and actions for improving the quality of life of children in Chile. Since 1994, the municipalities have elaborated local children's plans. Their implementation comes under the "Network of Municipalities that Defend Children", which since 1994 has comprised approximately 100 municipalities.

Lastly, at the international level, in 1996 Chile hosted a regional meeting, with the participation of more than 30 Ministers from the social sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, to evaluate progress in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I must underscore that, with a view to implementing the Convention, in 1993 we produced the first report on measures adopted by Chile to give effect to the rights recognized in the Convention. In November 1998, we drew up a second report, and

recently Chile finished the end-of-decade report on the achievement of the goals of the Lima Accord and the World Summit for Children.

Even though Chile's progress in fulfilling its commitment made at the World Summit for Children is significant, our country has a long road to travel to build a society where no children are deprived of school or health attention because of lack of means. Nevertheless, inspired by the commitments of the Summit, as well as by regional and Ibero-American agreements, Chile will make every effort to achieve the target of making our nation's children the priority sector of our social policies.

The promotion of children's interests at the international level received its first great stimulus in the World Summit for Children, the first global conference of the set of United Nations summits on economic and social affairs in the 1990s. I would mention in particular the World Social Summit, which also advanced the rights of children, particularly with regard to education and health.

At a time when we are closing the circle of the five-year review of the implementation of agreements and commitments undertaken at all those Conferences, my country has further undertaken to make every possible effort for the success of the special session of the General Assembly to review implementation of the agreements of the World Summit for Children. We express our full support for Ambassador Patricia Durrant of Jamaica, whose chairmanship of the Preparatory Committee guarantees the success of this important session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The commitment of the United Nations Children's Fund, particularly its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy, is also highly appreciated by the Government of my country.

Mrs. Al-Hajjaji (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The international community looks forward to September 2001 in order to participate effectively in the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. On this occasion, my country's delegation thanks the Secretary-General for the efforts to employ the indicators set up to measure the progress achieved in implementation of the recommendations of the Summit and the Plan of Action. We urge the Secretariat to continue gathering and analysing data to reinforce

national capacities. We also thank the Secretariat for its useful report.

My delegation also thanks the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the essential role that it has played as coordinator of the follow-up, and the Preparatory Committee for the remarkable efforts made for the colloquiums that have been held. The Libyan delegation is eagerly waiting to participate effectively in the two substantive sessions to be held in 2001.

In order to participate in the preparation for this special session, my delegation would like to draw attention to the following points, which we believe must be assigned a priority when discussing the rights, protection and well being of children.

First, we urge States to create free, high quality non-discriminatory education in primary schools in order to help children create and develop their personalities. In this way, their education will not consist exclusively of filling up their heads with old information.

Secondly, education is a solid foundation for breaking the evil of poverty. The struggle against poverty demands adequate resources and effective use of available resources to ensure the provision of health, social and educational services to children and families alike. We fully understand the importance of international cooperation and the need for the industrialized States to respect their commitments regarding official development assistance (ODA), the debt burden and debt servicing relief for the least developed countries in particular.

Thirdly, my delegation does not believe that the results of globalization are always negative in all circumstances, areas and in most countries, because, despite its negative consequences for the most vulnerable sectors, including children, we too can benefit from the enormous advances in technology, information and communications, if we employ them in the service of economic growth and social development, especially in the developing countries.

Fourthly, despite all the important advances we have made for children, which were enshrined in 1989, and despite the international ratification of the Convention, we still, as a community, have a long road to travel to fill the immense gap between the rights of children on the one hand and laws and real practice on the other.

Fifthly, we cannot talk about the Convention on the Rights of the Child without welcoming the adoption of the two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. There are those who have exploited the innocence of children and profited by exploiting them shamelessly. The report reveals that some have even killed children and fetuses for the commercial use of their organs.

When we speak of the rights, protection and well-being of children, we must also speak of the rights of women because discrimination against women, the violation of their rights and their exclusion and marginalization will invariably have an impact on children. Therefore, we must create an appropriate family environment that will promote the development and well-being of children. My country's delegation is convinced that the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies for children and women will remain unfinished and will fall short of our hopes if we fail to muster political will at the highest levels and strictly to respect those rights at the level of our political leadership. We must be certain that investments in these sectors are investments for all society, and not useless expenses.

The increasing use of drugs among children and youth is a phenomenon plaguing most countries of the world, rich and poor alike.

It is truly deplorable that, in certain armed conflicts, the use of children as soldiers is widespread. These children are abused, tortured and raped in order to force them to obey orders.

My delegation insists on the need for health care for children and mothers, including vaccination campaigns against contagious diseases. The countries of Africa, especially those of sub-Saharan Africa, are suffering shocking increases in the incidence of HIV/AIDS and its consequences, which are further proof of the need to educate children and youth about the transmission of the disease and prophylaxis.

During the second half of the past decade, the international community assigned high priority to the subject of violence against women. It must now assign the same priority to the question of violence against children, including violence and sexual abuse within the family; the assassination of homeless children by law enforcement officers in certain countries; the torture of children in places of detention; the murder of

children in civil wars and armed conflicts; and violence against and abuse of refugee, immigrant, poor, handicapped, homeless and other children. These are all extremely serious problems that we must address.

We believe that gender equality is just as important as the points I have already raised. My delegation is convinced that we cannot trust national laws that merely denounce such inequality. We must adopt indicators to measure the progress achieved.

Handicapped children suffer discrimination and violation of their rights at all phases of their lives, particularly if the handicap is accompanied by discrimination on the basis of colour, race, social origin or belonging to an ethnic or religious minority in any given society. My delegation expects a great deal from the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in South Africa next year. My delegation awaits with equal eagerness the conference to be held in Madrid next year on the importance of education in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination.

The resolutions of United Nations human rights agencies and the statements issued by agencies entrusted with the follow-up to the implementation of human rights instruments all insist on the inhumane and destructive impact of international sanctions imposed on certain countries. The international community acknowledges and insists on the fact that children are the most helpless sector of our societies. We must therefore reflect upon and assess the impact of sanctions on the health, education, nutrition, psychology, upbringing and morals of children. My delegation hopes that the Preparatory Committee will, at its future meetings, assign the necessary priority to these issues.

My country ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in April 1993. We have submitted two reports to date. The first was considered by the Committee, which made its own remarks and recommendations; the second, the periodic report, has yet to be debated. My country has also adopted International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The competent authorities of my country are currently considering the Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a view to signing and ratifying them in the future.

All our activities to promote the well-being and to protect the rights of children are the responsibility of an independent organization, the High Committee for Children, that enjoys the highest support and unlimited competency. In the discharge of its duties, the Committee works and cooperates with the agencies of civil society, non-governmental organizations and local community bodies in charge of orphans, handicapped, poor and addicted children and others.

My country has prepared a document entitled "The Rights and Duties of Women in Libya". This document was presented to and adopted by the Libyan Parliament in 1998. It enshrines the rights of mothers to raise their children in the family home; it also enshrines the rights of children to obtain Libyan nationality even when one parent is not a Libyan citizen.

The long-term policy adopted in my country is intended to allow for the development of healthy children through prenatal medical tests and the provision of all the nutritional needs of children. There is also work to detect congenital deformities, as well as vaccination campaigns. We have centres for social care in urban areas, and we are attempting to ensure the same services through itinerant services for the rural population sector.

These measures are intended to provide all the elements necessary for social education within the framework of educational organizations, associations and institutions for children in order to develop their skills and capacity for creativity. This policy is also aimed at relying less and less on police agencies to deal with infractions by children.

We insist that this problem be addressed within the family and by social workers. Furthermore, our long-term policy is aimed at creating juvenile courts and police. Specialized courts, social workers and psychologists would play an important role in this matter. We are also amending laws that govern work by women to allow them to spend as much time as possible with their children, especially in early childhood.

We could speak at length about the policies of my country regarding children and the protection of children. However, following up on what other countries have done, we need to work even harder at all levels to achieve our goals in this field. We will

continue to work tirelessly to promote the rights of children, their protection and their well-being.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): It gives me great pleasure to make this statement in this tenth anniversary year of the World Summit for Children. Despite the efforts made by Member States and concerned international organizations to achieve the goals agreed upon at that important gathering, there are still many children exposed to dangers such as recurring regional conflicts and natural disasters, and still more children living in the plight of extreme poverty.

The special session of the General Assembly for the follow-up of the World Summit for Children, to be held in September next year, will provide a very important opportunity to review and strengthen the international endeavour to protect the lives and well-being of children. My Government regards the success of the special session as of paramount importance and hopes that at the special session we shall reach a common understanding about the efforts made by Member States and the international community to maintain and enhance respect for the rights and welfare of children, including the results of past activities and the status of the new and ongoing tasks before us. The Government of Japan also hopes that we will engage in concrete and substantive discussion on how best to carry out these tasks.

One significant step that my Government has taken to protect and promote the rights of children since the World Summit for Children was the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994. Since 1995, Japan has contributed \$1 million annually to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programme on education for girls. As part of a follow-up effort to the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Japan has committed itself to provide to Africa about 90 billion yen — roughly \$857 million — in grant assistance in the areas of education, health care and water supply infrastructure over a five-year period starting in 1999, hoping to provide additional school facilities for 2 million children and to improve the living conditions for at least 15 million people throughout Africa. These are only some of the Japanese Government's efforts to protect and promote the rights and welfare of children internationally, particularly in Africa.

The Japanese Government is now preparing its country report, incorporating all the efforts Japan has made in the context of the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration, both of which were adopted at the World Summit for Children.

Since the World Summit for Children, the international community has come to regard the problems of children in armed conflicts and the commercial sexual exploitation of children as matters of great seriousness, inasmuch as they do harm to both the minds and the bodies of children. As a result, there have been serious efforts to address these problems. These efforts led to the adoption by the General Assembly in May this year of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The problem of children in armed conflicts was also addressed in the G-8 Miyazaki Initiative for Conflict Prevention, agreed by the G-8 Foreign Ministers on 13 July 2000. The Initiative has established approaches to be taken by the G-8 regarding war-affected children, including putting pressure on those who involve or target children in armed conflicts, in blatant breach of international standards, and prioritizing assistance for war-affected children in post-conflict reconstruction. As a follow-up to the G-8 Miyazaki Initiatives, Japan will co-host an international workshop and symposium from 19 to 21 November of this year with a focus on the reintegration of child soldiers into society. The workshop is aimed at exchanging lessons learned, to find out the most effective approaches and to promote further coordination among various actors in this field.

With regard to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, my Government is planning to host the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in December 2001 in Yokohama. It is aimed at promoting the implementation of the Agenda for Action to eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of children, adopted at the First World Congress. Through such projects Japan will continue to make positive efforts to ensure the success of the special session and to work together with other members of the international community for the promotion of the rights and welfare of children.

Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea). Ten years have passed since leaders from around the globe gathered at

the World Summit for Children and adopted the World Declaration and Plan of Action, which set a variety of goals to be achieved by 2000. A decade has also elapsed since the Convention on the Rights of the Child entered into force. During this period, we have made tangible improvements in the protection and promotion of the rights of children. Governments have come to an agreement that children's rights are universal human rights, making the promotion of these rights a priority in their agenda for policies and legislation. Consequently, children's issues have been given higher priority in virtually all related United Nations conferences and programmes.

As we all know, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the most universal among United Nations human rights instruments. We have also adopted the International Labour Organization Convention to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour and two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child: one on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the other on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Through the adoption of these legal instruments, the international community has expressed its strong conviction that, in the twenty-first century, children should be free from all violations of their rights.

Despite the encouraging progress, we still have a long way ahead of us. While increasing importance has been given to children's rights in national policies and legislation, there remain many obstacles to fully implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Declaration and the Plan of Action. In many parts of the world, countless children are still suffering from violations of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. Around the world, more than 600 million children live in extreme poverty on less than \$1 a day. One hundred and thirty million children in developing countries lack basic education; 1.2 million children live with HIV/AIDS and 13 million have lost their parents due to AIDS. Five hundred and forty million children live in dangerous and unstable situations, such as armed conflicts and humanitarian disasters. Two hundred and fifty million children in developing countries are forced to work, many of them in hazardous and exploitative conditions. The special session next year should be an opportunity to improve such distressing situations.

With regard to the special session, allow me to make a few points that deserve the attention and action of the international community.

First, my delegation believes that the special session should be based above all on the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention recognizes that children are subjects with rights, not objects of charity. However, due to traditional attitudes and their dependent status, many children are still far from enjoying these rights. Admittedly, the rights-based approach may clash with culture and tradition in some areas. However, my delegation believes that the rights of children should be given priority over cultural and traditional singularities.

Secondly, particular attention should be paid to the gap between the *de jure* and *de facto* rights of children. Enacting laws and making policies is not enough. Despite the existence of related laws and policies, there are many children who cannot enjoy their rights in practice. In order to fully implement such laws and policies, it is essential to strengthen a culture of respect for children's rights. My delegation hopes that the special session will provide its participants with an opportunity to redouble their efforts to achieve this goal.

Thirdly, I would like to mention a particular challenge facing children in the twenty-first century: the challenge of globalization. Globalization has by and large contributed to the advancement of children and the promotion of their rights. However, the uneven distribution of globalization's benefits has driven the wedge between the rich and the poor even deeper, further marginalizing children in developing countries. In this context, the special session should identify concrete measures to allocate more benefits derived from globalization to the children in developing countries. My delegation expects significant contributions from all the relevant United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions in devising these measures.

Last June, during the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, we had the opportunity to conduct a debate on the progress we had achieved in the 1990s and the emerging issues regarding children in the twenty-first century. The conclusion then reached was that an integrated approach to the rights and well-being of children and adolescents based on their life-cycle provides us with a useful framework for building

a new strategy for children in the future. We also realized that children and adolescents should be given the opportunity to duly participate in the decision-making process on issues that affect them as well as to play a role in the development of tolerant, peaceful and democratic societies. I hope the outcome document of the special session will effectively reflect these important elements.

In addition, my delegation is of the view that the outcome document should appropriately reflect the differences among regions, where the situation of children varies accordingly. The goal of the special session should be the building of a tailored strategy to meet the specific needs of a region, rather than of a uniform world strategy. In this respect, my delegation places great importance on the active participation of civil society, particularly from developing countries, in the special session as well as in its preparatory process. Civil society has played an essential role in promoting children's rights and welfare. Its members are well of the specific needs of children in the region they represent.

Finally, I would like to express the firm commitment of the Republic of Korea to contribute to the success of the special session.

Mr. Fernando (Sri Lanka): I consider it a great honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of Sri Lanka under your presidency, Sir, on this important subject.

As I am sure it is in other parts of the world, so also in Sri Lanka our culture has taught us to hold the family unit in sacred esteem, to regard the child as a blessing. This has been so since time immemorial. Over time, the ravages wreaked on human relationships and societies have caused the erosion of family values and the breaking up of the family. There is a distancing of religious institutions from the day-to-day lives of children — religious institutions that for thousands of years had a role in moulding personality and character. There is deterioration in all those relationships and conditions that should surround a child and serve as its protection in its formative years.

It is important that we make what could be called a "comprehensive cultural endeavour" to resuscitate the well-being of families in societies in order that they may serve as units of protection for their children.

The principal purpose of the World Summit for Children in 1990 was the adoption of its Declaration on children. The Declaration sought to give expression to the fundamental belief that every child should be given a better future. A Plan of Action, also adopted at the 1990 World Summit for Children, sought to convert that universal appeal into the language of universal commitment and to serve as a guide for governmental, non-governmental, national and international entities in developing their own particular programmes for their own particular needs.

The report of the Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 expresses the view that the starting point of international development strategies that emphasize equitable human development is quite naturally the rights and well-being of children. It is children whose individual development and social contribution shape the world's future, and it is through children that intergenerational cycles of poverty, exclusion and discrimination can be broken. It was this view that infused the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and inspired the World Summit for Children.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the convening of the World Summit for Children in 1990 and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/93 in 1999, proposing the convening of the special session of the General Assembly in 2001, serve to remind us that all States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child should evaluate their programmes and plans with a view to implementing the principal purpose of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the protection and well-being of the child.

I would like to inform the Assembly that Sri Lanka has established a National Child Protection Authority directly under the supervision of the President of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has formulated a Children's Charter. A National Plan of Action for Children has been adopted in Sri Lanka. The National Child Protection Authority, the Children's Charter and the National Plan of Action for Children together provide a comprehensive perspective within which we have sought in Sri Lanka to provide for the safety and well-being of our children. As part of this national vision, specific aspects of child care are being handled: compulsory education for children between five and fourteen years of age; national programmes to provide

for nutrition and immunization; reforms to maintenance laws; and a long-established programme of free universal health care.

A particularly cruel offence against the innocence of children in Sri Lanka is, of course, their forced recruitment by a terrorist group in Sri Lanka to serve as child soldiers. This is a matter on which, on more than one occasion, high authorities of Sri Lanka have addressed this Assembly.

At the Millennium Summit this year, Sri Lanka ratified the Optional Protocol under the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

With assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Sri Lanka is currently in the process of preparing a report on the progress made with regard to the rights of the child during the last decade. The report is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Sri Lanka commends the overall project-based approach of UNICEF in dealing with issues pertaining to children. While conventions undoubtedly have their uses, UNICEF has shown how we can go beyond conventions, to projects in the field that attempt to recreate the environments — social, religious, cultural and other environments — that are so fundamental for the preservation and the well-being of families and their children.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has addressed in South Asia such subjects as poverty alleviation, the plight of children and children's education. Progress in these fields has been uneven from country to country. Nevertheless, I would like the Assembly to know that the countries of South Asia, under the umbrella of SAARC, as well as individually, endeavour to address these basic questions relating to the child. The draft texts of two Conventions have been finalized: the Regional Convention on Combating the Crime of Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. When they enter into force, these Conventions could benefit millions in the region.

Therefore, it is our appeal, in the light of the circumstances of children in Sri Lanka, that the special session on children should give particular attention to

such matters as poverty alleviation, access to adequate education, access to adequate health care and the overall preservation of the family. Sri Lanka looks forward to participating wholeheartedly in the special session of the General Assembly in 2001.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): I am pleased to participate in the discussion of this important issue, which is a priority for my country as well as for the international community. This deliberation is sure to help prepare meticulously for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to follow up the World Summit for Children.

Children are our hope and inspiration. As the ones we most love and care for, who will carry our torch into the future, they deserve the best protection and opportunity we can give them so that they will grow into confident, capable and responsible members of our societies and into enlightened citizens of the planet earth. Unfortunately, they often become pawns, standing helplessly in the line of fire in an unscrupulous political, economic or social endgame on a volatile world chessboard.

The past few years have witnessed many significant advances towards promoting and protecting children's rights. Two landmark achievements have been the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1989, and the holding of the World Summit for Children, in 1990. The Convention, its two Optional Protocols and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children provide the most comprehensive framework to date in the promotion of children's rights and welfare. Nepal views the adoption of the International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour as a welcome step. We hope that the Convention will provide effective protection for children from exposure to the worst forms of labour.

Though a good beginning has been made, progress in improving the status of children remains uneven. While developed countries have been able to secure dramatic improvements in the status of their children, developing countries are still entangled in the mire of poverty and other, multifarious problems that impede their efforts to do the same. Most developing countries now have child-specific development programmes and legal frameworks in place. Among

them, those with respectable and sustained economic growth have been able to do better than those with slow or no growth. The developing world overall has much catching up to do.

The situation of children in poorer parts of the world remains precarious. Children, as defenceless and vulnerable as they are, have become the principal victims of poverty, inequities and violence. Ill-equipped and ill-prepared to take an increasingly liberal economic onslaught head on, poor countries have been thrown — with their inherent enormous disadvantages — into a globalizing economic arena to fend for themselves. They have lost the traditional economic moorings that closed and import-substitution regimes provided, without getting much benefit from widening global markets. As a result, children in such countries, together with the rest of their compatriots, have suffered enormously from the negative consequences of exclusive globalization.

Children have become easy targets for, and victims of, violence, displacement, sexual abuse, trafficking and economic exploitation. Natural disasters, displacement, wars and conflicts worsen their situation further. Children suffer unspeakable distress in armed conflict and its aftermath. Our hearts bleed when we see children become innocent victims and, worse, perpetrators of violence in conflict situations. Countries that are home to large numbers of refugees know how painful the situation of refugee children becomes.

The sad spectacle of a child in military fatigues toting a gun offers a most horrendous image that deeply hurts our conscience. Many children are sacrificed on the altar of greed, hubris or prejudice, which is often anchored in a difference in culture or ethnic origin. Those who survive carry for the rest of their lives the irreparable physical disability and psychological trauma that conflict leaves in its wake. Girl children, particularly, suffer the ignominy and scars of abuse and violence, which prevent them all their lives from blossoming into emotionally balanced and caring human beings.

The adoption of the Agenda for War-Affected Children at the International Conference on War-Affected Children and armed conflict, held at Winnipeg two months ago, inspires some hope for my delegation. We thank the Government of Canada for hosting that meeting. I am happy to note that the Asia-Pacific

Conference on this issue was held in Kathmandu in May this year. The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict deserves our great appreciation for his continuous efforts to address the issue. But the question remains, how are we going to get non-State actors to comply with the various standards and norms we have evolved?

We have a daunting challenge before us, individually as well as globally. So much needs to be done before every child has food on his or her dinner table, can attend school and has basic health care and potable drinking water.

The level of education and health of parents, as well as the size, economic status and location of the family, are some of the important elements that have significant bearing on children's rights and welfare. Educated parents have the proclivity to send their children to school and to seek health services for them. The situation in cities is generally better than in rural areas, as city dwellers tend to have higher incomes, smaller families and better access to education and health facilities. Children in poverty-stricken rural areas and urban slums are usually worse off. Poor families tend to have a larger family size, for an additional child means an extra source of income in a situation where living amounts to keeping one's soul and body together from one day to the next. A free school-feeding programme, as a source of motivation for the child and of supplemental income for the family, ensures better class attendance, if such a programme can be launched and sustained. Mobile health facilities help wean people away from the clutches of seers and superstition. That millions of children are likely to die of HIV/AIDS in the next few years, particularly in Africa, scares my delegation.

Greater investment in a country in the education, health and other key social sectors in general, and in poorer areas in particular, is obviously an absolutely essential prerequisite for protecting the rights of children and promoting their welfare. But it will work only when child-specific development programmes are backed up by sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Strict legal measures against child abuse and violence are equally necessary to achieve these objectives.

In short, protecting children's rights and promoting their welfare involves a whole range of overarching issues pertaining to nation-building and

development. Selective measures alone are not enough to do the trick. Success calls for a clean and accountable Government making sound policies and using scarce resources prudently; it calls for the rule of law and a fair legal and institutional framework; it calls for sustained growth with justice, and sustainable development with environmental protection; it calls for harnessing the ingenuity and enterprise of individuals, the private sector, civil society and communities; and not least, it calls for a favourable external environment, together with compassionate development partners who are ready to help their less privileged partners in their endeavour to achieve the same objectives. The Millennium Declaration rightly sets out what we ought to do for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, which will also serve the cause of children well.

Nepal strongly believes in democracy, the rule of law and the observance of human rights, including the rights of children. Our society is founded on the bedrock of the family as an institution. The family is a cradle of love, care and safety for children. It teaches the virtues of tolerance and interdependence and fosters the values of solidarity and conscientiousness. In the family and in society, children take precedence in opportunities, safety and welfare.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nepal is fully committed to working further to promote and protect children's rights. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal prohibits exploitation of children and protects their rights and benefits. The necessary legal and institutional framework, encompassing most of the Convention provisions, is already in place. A child development action plan which aims at ensuring children's rights and development, including those of handicapped children, disabled street children, child labourers and children in difficult conditions, has been adopted as an integral part of our national development plan.

We recently established an independent national Human Rights Commission and a separate Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare. Similarly, separate juvenile benches have been established in district courts, the lowest tier of our court system.

Despite the best of efforts, however, a poor country like Nepal is constrained in its capacity to suddenly transform its society and hence to transform the status of its children, who constitute nearly half of

our population. An agonizing lack of resources amidst poverty ties our hands.

Therefore, our efforts and capacity alone will not suffice. While we are striving hard to keep our house in order, we will also need substantially enhanced support and assistance from the international community to accelerate our economic development and social progress: more aid, trade concessions and debt relief, among other things.

We view next year's special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children as an important opportunity for the international community to assess the progress made so far, to reflect on where we have gone wrong, leaving us short of meeting the goals set at the World Summit for Children in 1990, and to rededicate ourselves to the cause of our children with greater vigour and commitment. That is the approach that Nepal has been pursuing in its preparations for the special session next year.

Let us face it: there are no easy solutions to the problems we and our children face, especially in our poor countries. Selective intervention with pro-children programmes may by itself be of some help, but not much. We must come up with innovative approaches and fresh outlooks, with children at the centre of all our endeavours. We need to work together and cooperate to harness the kind of development that lifts all boats in the developing world. To succeed, we need to have the requisite political will and to get our priorities right.

Mr. Vantsevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): In 1990, the leaders of the world's countries gathered at the World Summit for Children to formulate a Plan of Action to protect the rights of children and to ensure that children enjoy a happy childhood and a dignified future. Ten years on, in the Millennium Declaration, our leaders reaffirmed their responsibilities towards the world's children, to whom the future belongs. The next important event, on which such great hopes are pinned, will be the 2001 special session of the General Assembly on children.

I wish to take this opportunity to set out the position of Belarus on the most important issues relating to the preparation and holding of the special session, and to express our hope that today's debate will make a positive contribution to the overall preparatory process for the special session.

The 1990 World Summit for Children was the first event to be effective in promoting children's issues. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the Summit set out the principles that have guided and inspired us over the past 10 years in our work to improve the situation of children. Among the achievements of the world community is the nearly universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Republic of Belarus can say proudly that it was among the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention.

The power and relevance of the Convention were confirmed again by the Assembly's adoption in May 2000 of two Optional Protocols to the Convention, which fully rise to the challenges facing today's generation of children and young people.

The Republic of Belarus notes with satisfaction the progress in the preparatory process for the 2001 special session and in the various important concrete measures being taken at the national, regional and international levels. That reflects the universal understanding of the importance of reviving the spirit of the World Summit, which means recognizing the national and international obligations of States and a common commitment to fulfilling those obligations.

Let me refer to just a few of the impressive number of events that have taken place or that are planned in Belarus as part of the preparatory process for the special session. These include a national report, entitled "The position of children in the Republic of Belarus in the year 2000"; preparations for an international symposium, entitled "Human rights and education: problems and prospects"; a national children's forum, entitled "Education for human rights"; and a round table, entitled "Problems of developing children's initiatives and participation in the global movement for children". There are many other events to which I could refer.

Belarus shares the view that one of the goals of the special session should be to renew the objectives of the 1990 World Summit on the basis of the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, bearing in mind the requirements of today's world. We should pay particular attention to the issue of the final outcome document of the special session, which should become a kind of programme of action for children as we look to the future. We agree that this document should be innovative, brief and to the point. However,

it is important to make sure that its scope is broad enough to cover the problems of children in all regions of the world, without exception.

It is important for us to remain aware that our work for children should be structured around three main areas: giving them a good start in life; providing everything they need for a decent education; and ensuring the kind of climate in which they can fully develop their inherent potential as young people. We are convinced that the outcome document must include such issues as the eradication of poverty; the consequences of armed conflict; the vulnerability of children during AIDS epidemics; the provision of universal access for children to education and health care; and the harmful consequences for children of humanitarian disasters, including industrial accidents.

There is less than a year to go before the special session on children. Ultimately, its success will depend to a very great extent on how effectively we use the intervening time. One result of the special session should be the adoption of a renewed world action plan for children that could be an effective instrument through which to promote and defend the rights of children over the decade to come.

Mr. Al-Khal (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the State of Qatar on this agenda item, "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children". Given the great importance of this issue at the national, regional and international levels, it is indeed an honour to make this statement.

The World Summit for Children, which took place in New York in September 1990 and was attended by heads of State or Government and high-ranking officials from more than 150 countries, was a historic occasion. It may have served as the precursor to the subsequent attention given to children and children's rights, which placed them at the forefront of our consideration of human rights in general.

The World Summit established various ambitious goals for the 1990s, and set out a Plan of Action which stated that the goals should be achieved by 2000. During its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 54/93, decided to hold a special session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The special session must review the implementation of the programme set out in the Declaration on children and ensure that we are indeed providing protection for

children and providing for their development at the highest levels possible.

An invitation has been sent to heads of State or Government to participate in this session, which will take place in September 2001. During the special session we must renew our commitment and consider what action should be taken during the next decade. My delegation takes this opportunity to express our gratitude to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the part that it has played in promoting the welfare of children throughout the world and for the support that it has provided for the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. Of course, we are also grateful to the Member States that have prepared and implemented their own plans of action.

Millions of children are added every year to the world population. It is indeed regrettable that the majority of them are born into poverty. The situation of the vast majority of children is worse today than at any time in the past. It is therefore essential for the international community to renew its commitment to the goals of the World Summit for Children and to adopt whatever initiatives may be necessary to improve the living standards of hundreds of thousands of children who are growing up in extreme poverty. Our consciences should not allow children to live in suffering and poverty, especially in a world with so much potential and so many resources. The United Nations must make it clear that this situation is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated, neither for this generation of children nor for those of the future.

Among the great challenges that the international community faces today, we could include the need to eliminate the huge gulf between the conditions and the quality of life of children in some countries compared with others. Obviously, the developing countries cannot earmark the kind of resources needed to implement the goals enshrined in the texts of the World Summit for Children, not because they lack the will but because they lack the necessary resources, and because of their increased indebtedness and the lack of resources needed to pay for servicing external debts. Unless we alleviate the debt burden, it is unlikely that these countries will be able to implement their national policies fully and achieve the goals of the Summit in the near future.

The protection of children who are suffering as a result of armed conflict in different parts of the world

is a noble goal; international efforts must be made to stop children from being recruited and exploited in armed conflict. I feel I must stress here what is being done to protect children as a whole and Arab children in particular. My Government calls for granting Arab children the right to life, safety, education and development in the occupied Arab territories.

In order to achieve this we need to put an end to the military operations that are being conducted against civilians and children in Palestine. Children there are falling under the hail of bullets of the occupying forces, in a situation that lacks any moral constraints and where everything is being done to prevent the people of Palestine from living in dignity and peace the way people of other nations do. We all saw the pictures of the brutal killing of the boy Mohamed al-Darra, who was shot down by the bullets of the Israeli forces. This kind of thing is continuing as we sit here talking.

Qatar considers support for the United Nations Committee on Children a matter of primary importance. We also agree that given the extra work that the Committee will have when the two optional protocols to Convention on the Rights of the Child enter into force, the number of experts serving on the Committee should be increased to 18.

The State of Qatar put forward the candidacy of Mrs. Ghalia Mohd bin Hamad Al-Thani for the forthcoming elections. These elections are to take place at the eighth meeting of the States parties of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which will be held in New York in February 2001. We propose her to serve on the Committee, given her great competence in the area of child protection. It would give an extra impetus to the Committee on the Rights of the Child to have such a new member.

My Government is fully convinced of the need to allow all children to enjoy their legitimate rights. We signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 on 8 December 1992, and ratified it on 3 April 1995. Our Government intends to implement all the objectives of this Convention and will undertake all necessary measures to guarantee the economic, social and educational rights of children and their leisure and cultural activities without any discrimination. The State of Qatar has no laws that allow any discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, language or any other factor that might prevent children from enjoying their rights.

The principle laid down in article 3 of the Convention, which states that providing services to children should be a priority for the States parties, is enshrined in the State of Qatar's basic statute, which is our constitution. Article 7 of Qatar's statute states that the family is the basis of our society. This law provides the necessary protection for the family and establishes that children and the younger generation must be protected from everything that might harm them or deprive them of their rights. To achieve this the State has adopted new legislation and new measures to defend children and their rights. These actions include the establishment of a high council for family matters that provides the basis for a healthy society, as ordained by the constitution of Qatar.

The constitution also guarantees free education at all levels. The Education Ministry has made it clear that every educational institution at whatever level must have a library with thousands of books as well as new and old journals. In fact, school magazines and magazines written by school children are a good way for children to express their views. To this end the Ministry has special cultural and knowledge competitions for children. We also recently had direct and free elections throughout the educational system in order to encourage students to enjoy and use their democratic rights and express their points of view in complete freedom via schools' councils, the representatives of which are elected by the students themselves.

As far as health is concerned, the Ministry of Health is responsible for the protection of children's health. This ministry makes sure that we are raising a healthy generation of young people protected from anything that might affect their health — especially from contagious diseases that kill so many children.

To sum up, even though it is established that primary responsibility for international commitments rests on the shoulders of national Governments, it is important that we state clearly how important the United Nations and the entire international community are to this work. The United Nations is an irreplaceable lead organization for mobilizing our resources and the national resources of poorer countries. This is why we hope that the next special session will provide a good opportunity for re-establishing our commitment and for adopting a new international plan of action to pursue the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular to safeguard future

generations — in other words, the future of our children.

Qatar will work alongside other States to guarantee the success of this special session and to make sure that we achieve our goals in the priority area of taking care of our children.

Mr. Aguzzi-Durán (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled the "State of the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children", which is contained in document A/55/429. We would also like to thank the Preparatory Committee for the special session for its report, which is contained in document A/55/43, parts I and II.

For our Government the theme of children is a priority. A large part of the social policies in the areas of education, health and nutrition are focused on the boys and girls of our country. We in Venezuela have given ourselves a new constitution that devotes one of its first sections to the duties, human rights and guarantees provided to individuals. The Constitution also enshrines gender equality as it embraces the principle of equality and non-discrimination. In Venezuela there is equitable treatment for girls and boys.

Furthermore, we are making far-reaching, decisive progress in the process of adapting our legislation to the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, it is particularly worth noting the adoption of the basic law for the protection of children and adolescents, which came into force on 1 April 2000. We have given it the status of basic law because it contains programmatic, substantive and procedural standards, principles and provisions that must be met by other laws in this connection. Furthermore, this law takes preference over other laws and contains provisions that repeal standards contained in previous basic laws in our country.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has considered this law one of the most advanced pieces of legislation in the area of the human rights of children in the American continent. The law acknowledges that full respect for children's rights must be guaranteed, and that they are not wards of the State. By this, we mean that they are capable of demanding, acting and proposing. We acknowledge

that the child is thus a person in development, with the rights and responsibilities inherent to all human beings. In addition to acknowledging and defining their rights, the law provides effective ways to ensure them.

As of the entry into force of this law, we have begun to establish the institutions that, according to the same text, will be in charge of seeing to the fulfilment of the individual and collective rights of children and adolescents in Venezuela, with no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, age, language, thought, conscience, religion, beliefs, culture, political or other opinion, economic position, social, ethnic or national origin, disability, disease, conditions of birth or any other condition of the child or adolescent, their parents, representatives or responsible family members. With this law, Venezuela is honouring its international commitments and is adapting its domestic legislation to the principles and standards contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide comprehensive protection for them, both socially and legally.

The aforementioned law also provides for the creation of the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents as a public, deliberative, consultative, monitoring entity, with its own legal standing, autonomous in discharging its functions, and with responsibility for ensuring respect for the rights of children and adolescents. It is the ultimate authority in the protection system.

As in any process, this one has stages, and we have concluded the first one, perhaps the easiest one. We are going into a new stage with the creation of the national, regional and local institutions in charge of ensuring the exercise of rights and of institutionalizing, reporting, disseminating and promoting the principles and standards established in the new law. The aim is that people will know what those rights are and what the duties and responsibilities of the State, the family and the community are. The Government of Venezuela has made a commitment to remain firm in the fulfilment and enforcement of this legislation, because it establishes as a basic principle the co-responsibility of the Venezuelan State and society in defending the rights of children and adolescents.

Venezuela has repeatedly supported regional and international initiatives and projects in favour of children. Our active participation in this field is no more than a reflection of that commitment; therefore,

we have co-sponsored draft resolution A/55/L.34, which will shortly be presented by Ambassador Patricia Durrant. From this rostrum, we wish to take the opportunity to recognize the Permanent Representative of Jamaica and the other officers of the Preparatory Committee for their dedication and unflagging efforts to ensure the success of the General Assembly's special session in 2001 to which Venezuela assigns high priority. Venezuela will cooperate resolutely to ensure the result we are all hoping for. We also recognize the tenacious efforts made for children in need throughout the world by UNICEF and its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): My delegation feels greatly strengthened and inspired by the strides that the United Nations is making on the rights of children. It is a triumph of this era that we have been able to expound children's human rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a milestone instrument, one which my country, Fiji, has embraced fully; we are discharging our requisite responsibilities thereunder despite resource and other constraints.

The political will to effect positive attitudinal change is evidenced in the accomplishments made to date by the Coordinating Committee on children. This cross-sectoral and interdepartmental body of governmental and non-governmental organizations submitted Fiji's initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and continues to monitor the domestic application of the Convention, despite its lack of a formal budget component and of a permanent secretariat.

The convening of a special session on children is greatly appreciated by my Government, and we hope that its outcome will bring about greater awareness of the plight of children in the global context and provide solutions for the well-being of both present and future generations.

There are two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the participation of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Although these issues are not immediate problems to a great extent in Fiji, they remain equally important in our continuing commitment to children's rights.

The outcome of the special session needs to be action-oriented and innovative. It should aim to position children and children's human rights alongside all fundamental human rights. To achieve this outcome, it is critical to define a meaningful process for the participation of children in the preparatory meeting and in the special session itself. We also hope to overcome obstacles in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through this process. Clearly, the modality that will ensure the optimum participation of children needs to be defined. The modality should consist of guidelines and procedures for non-State parties to participate with observer status.

Fiji is optimistic that we can find an amicable process that would accommodate the sensitivities of Member States and, more importantly, give voice to the children to directly inform the special session of the General Assembly. In particular, as we search for global peace, and as we are deliberating on a culture of peace in this Assembly, the special session presents the ideal opportunity to build this principle into the culture of human rights, in which the rights of children constitute an innovative dimension.

Fiji stands ready to contribute to the preparation and successful convening of the special session, and we urge all Member States to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.34 by consensus.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes the convening of the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, to be held here in New York in September next year. We deeply appreciate the United Nations efforts in placing the well-being, protection and rights of children at the core of its concern since its inception in 1945, with the first standard-setting Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. This Declaration affirms the right of children to special protection, opportunities and facilities for a healthy, normal development.

Today, the world's obligation towards children is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989, thus ensuring that the support and protection of children are the responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States worldwide. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has extended great efforts to ensure that children lead safe, healthy and productive lives, while other United Nations agencies — such as the International Labour

Organization, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — and the various Special Representatives have also played their part in the protection and promotion of children's well-being.

Nevertheless, Malaysia is sad to note that, since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children held here in New York in 1990, tens of millions of children around the world remain victims of war, poverty, abuse and exploitation. In view of this grave situation, it is urgent that the international community make an assessment of developments since then and formulate future actions and priorities to protect the well-being of children, with the aim of achieving significant human development gains within one generation.

In the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, he states, *inter alia*, that

"children have increasingly been victimized as both the targets and the perpetrators of violence".
(A/55/163, para. 2)

Children make up almost half of the world's 21 million refugees and another 13 million children are estimated to be internally displaced. UNICEF data are also grim, indicating that 2 million children were killed in armed conflicts in the 10 years between 1986 and 1996, while another 6 million were injured, 10 million traumatized and 1 million orphaned. The report incorporated several recommendations that must be addressed, particularly those that could deter the exploitation of children in armed conflict and those to promote the building of a culture of prevention.

Malaysia is deeply concerned by the plight of these children affected by armed conflict and believes that their special needs must be taken into consideration, particularly their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration. My delegation calls on all Member States to make every effort to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict and to give children their due right to enjoy a normal childhood.

Another area of concern to my delegation is the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which are quite rampant around the world. My delegation deplores these activities, and

international community must also address these issues and find solutions to them.

The report entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", contained in document A/AC.256/3, has highlighted some progress made in the last decade that has improved the lot of children in the world. Since the welfare of women is linked to that of children, the advances made in the promotion and protection of the rights of women have benefited children as well. In this regard, my delegation is heartened to note that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has significantly advanced the rights of women, which in turn has also positively impacted on children.

My delegation is also of the view that poverty is still a major hindrance to social and human development in many developing countries, where children are the hardest hit by poverty. It is imperative that development programmes emphasize the rights and well-being of children, as their development will contribute to the shaping of the future. Efforts must be made to ensure that children are given proper nourishment and health care to avoid malnutrition and disease, as well as access to basic education.

Malaysia has incorporated the promotion and protection of the rights of children into our national policies, namely, the National Welfare Policy, the Family Policy within the National Population Policy, the National Policy on Women, the National Development Plans and the New Economic Policy. The National Welfare Policy emphasizes the importance of the family in nation-building, while the Family Policy includes programmes for the survival, protection and development of children. The National Policy on Women highlighted issues on children: child abuse, child labour, child care, abandoned children, missing children and gender preferences. The Five-Year Malaysia Development Plan aims at stimulating economic growth, developing human resources and enhancing the quality of life of Malaysians, including children. Our New Economic Policy includes measures introduced to provide opportunities and affirmative action for the children of disadvantaged groups through the building of residential schools, textbook loan schemes, financial aid and the management of

To ensure a positive future for the children, we must give them a good start in life so that they can be physically healthy, mentally alert, emotionally secure, socially competent and able to learn. They must also be given the opportunity to complete a good-quality basic education. These opportunities will enable them to participate in and contribute to their society. We look forward to the preparatory work for the special session on children and Malaysia will participate actively in them to ensure the success of the session.

Mr. Jacob (Israel). It is an honour to speak today on behalf of the Israeli delegation on this important agenda item. The survival, protection and development of the children of the world is an issue of great significance and one which has concerned the General Assembly and other United Nations organs for many years.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1989 was a milestone in the crusade for children's rights, creating a viable legal and ethical mechanism with which to promote and protect the rights of children. Since then, various resolutions and declarations have been issued which have augmented that Convention. Indeed, today, as we consider the resolution on the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, we rededicate ourselves to the further development of this issue and the continued pursuit of our goal to protect the children of the world.

In her speech last year before the General Assembly marking the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Executive Director Carol Bellamy of the United Nations Children's Fund cited well-known and immensely disturbing statistics that gravely illustrate the plight of children in less developed areas of the world. Despite the unprecedented wealth of our globe, nearly 32,000 children under the age of five die each day of preventable causes, totalling nearly 12 million deaths each year. These are numbers that should mobilize every Member State in an age in which we possess unparalleled ability to prevent disease, malnutrition, poverty, illiteracy, violence and exploitation.

Today, this Assembly is renewing its commitment to consider and pursue future action on behalf of children in the coming decade. Israel wholeheartedly

Nations Children's Fund, to review progress achieved since the World Summit for Children and to encourage appropriate actions in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly.

In this regard, I would like to comment on various developments that have taken place in Israel in recent years affecting the rights of the child:

In a landmark decision of October 1999, the Supreme Court of Israel, setting a precedent both nationally and internationally, imposed tort damages on a parent who neglected the children in his care by completely estranging himself from them and inflicting severe emotional damage. Although the circumstances were extreme, this decision is indicative of the special sensitivity accorded to children's rights in my country.

In another landmark ruling in January of this year, the Israeli Supreme Court condemned, in absolute terms, the resort to the corporal punishment of children as a method of discipline and child raising. This ruling is indicative of the growing awareness in Israel of the appalling phenomena of child abuse and violence. It further serves as a warning that such patterns of misconduct are not only immoral and repugnant, but are also unlawful in our society. It sends a clear message that the use of force against children is a gross degradation of their human dignity and is an infringement on the child's physical integrity and mental health.

This ruling marks a milestone in Israel's long-standing campaign against domestic violence in general and child abuse in particular. It follows an earlier ruling of the Supreme Court that prohibited the use of physical punishment by teachers and other caregivers. Following Israel's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, the adoption of the Israeli Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty ensured that the rights of the child are endowed with constitutional protection. There has been a significant and steady rise in the number of domestic judicial decisions grounded on the rationale underlying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, voicing and echoing children's perspectives and their right to human dignity, advancing their rights and setting harsher penalties for unlawful treatment of children. In this respect it should be noted that, even prior to the Court's recent ruling, our penal law imposed criminal liability on parents

In addition to these specific changes, comprehensive reform is underway in Israel in the realm of children's rights. In 1997 a special committee was appointed to review existing legislation in this field in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to recommend appropriate revisions. In addition, a recent bill passed by the Israeli Parliament establishes commissions on the status of the child in every municipality, with child representatives sitting on their boards. In addition, we are now in the process of planning educational campaigns in the media and in schools to increase sensitivity to children's rights and to raise public awareness.

Yet despite all this, great hurdles lay ahead, both in Israel and in the world at large. Anachronistic social and traditional norms are still evident in many societies, and the practice of beating children remains widespread. We believe that the way in which a society treats children and other vulnerable groups is, to a great extent, a mirror of its values. Let us endeavour then to build on the progress of the last decade and to take steps that will ensure that the values of the international community are consistent with our objectives on behalf of children. These efforts must continue without respite until that day when every single child is guaranteed the chance to grow in good health, with adequate nutrition and education, and in an environment of peace and security.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): As the year 2000 draws to the end, we are approaching the special session of the General Assembly on children. This important global event, as we are all aware, has been designed and oriented to review the progress achieved and recommend the best practices to overcome obstacles encountered in achieving the goals set by the World Summit in 1990. Fortunately, the special session of the General Assembly on children is being convened at a time when the international community has the valuable asset of practical experience derived from numerous review processes on the world conferences held in the 1990s.

We should also remind ourselves that one of the great strengths of this process compared with others is that the world has been able — going beyond the current North-South political and ideological debate — to virtually arrive at a consensus on an instrument or

protect children worldwide. The international community should seize this highly unique opportunity to act vigorously and in absolute terms to realize the already defined goals in this domain.

For the special session to become a success, the international community ought to address numerous challenges still remaining in the path ahead.

First, ten years have passed since the World Summit convened by the General Assembly in 1990. The international community has witnessed drastic changes and developments in this period. The vision, strategy and goals adopted by the World Summit need to be reviewed with a view to their updating in accordance with the current framework, agreed at the international level, as to the priorities and areas to which the United Nations and Member States should devote their resources. This challenge has rightly been addressed by the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee in paragraph five of her summary (*A/55/43, Annex I, para. 5*) and was referred to again in the panel discussion on the review and assessment process. Protection of children in times of war or armed conflict, especially children in territories under occupation, needs to be qualitatively targeted and given prominence in the review process. Poverty and the sexual abuse of children are also of immense importance and should find their way into the deliberations of the upcoming special session. What matters most in the context of updating the goals of the World Summit is the observance of and full attention to the principles of equality and non-selectivity in reviewing the themes and situations in which children are most vulnerable.

Secondly, globalization is a two-sided phenomenon. The mixed effects and impacts of globalization were also vividly seen among children. While globalization has been a driving force for the enhancement of cooperation and convergence at the global level, it has at the same time generated profound exclusionary and negative consequences for children. The special session should take measures to ensure that the dynamism of globalization is fully exploited to counteract negative impacts such as the sexual exploitation of children and the spread of HIV/AIDS, as well as to fight vigorously against these manifestations. On the question of sexual exploitation, it should be remembered that increasing poverty and underdevelopment, as well as the diverse causes of free

market, including through the globalized media and information services, have essentially contributed to the persistence of this evil phenomenon.

The international community must act to shape operational strategies to ensure that the gains of globalization are evenly distributed for all peoples and individuals, especially women and children. Children in the urban and rural areas of all regions must benefit from the advantages of globalization.

Thirdly, developing indicators and building capacities and infrastructures at the national level to respond effectively to the current needs for the protection of children is highly significant in the process of the end-of-decade review. Areas such as social services, poverty, legal deficiencies, education and health are the pillars of a sound and comprehensive reform policy at the national level. At the international level, creating a just and favourable international environment is the essential factor for the success of domestic policies geared to the protection of children. Factors such as sufficient resources, removal of debt burdens and the adoption of sound and just policies by the Bretton Woods institutions play a key role in assisting Governments to respond to domestic challenges.

Fourthly, strengthening the institution of the family and family bonds is one of the most effective ways to protect children from numerous threats facing them in different societies. The family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural unit for the growth and well-being of all its members, particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within communities. The family will raise the children in an environment of happiness, love and understanding that will certainly prevent them from breaking away from their primary shelter and their exposure to sexual and other forms of exploitation. The special session should, in our view, give prominence to this important issue.

There have been many conferences and seminars held at the national and regional levels on the protection of children throughout the world. The end-of-decade reviews to be submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are being prepared at the national levels. The upcoming special session and its preparatory

experiences of all the participants in general, and of those that have made considerable accomplishments and gains in their countries in particular. The experiences gained by Governments through hard and complex processes are valuable assets on the basis of which the international community should develop best practices in the best interests of children.

While discussing the key issues of the special session, I am duty-bound to highlight the situation of Palestinian children in the occupied territories. Today all mankind is witnessing the struggle of the Palestinian people, especially the children, to liberate their land from the occupying force. Every day we see on the television screens images of horrendous atrocities. Palestinian children are being shot to death from the air and with automatic machine guns and tanks. They only seem, at most, to be throwing rocks at those who have occupied their land and homes and have oppressed and savagely humiliated them for decades. The children of Palestine have not only been robbed of their childhood, but they have also been victimized in the most violent manner by the occupying force, in total violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

We cannot and shall not remain indifferent to this inhumane travesty of justice. Whether or not we rise to this challenge, Palestinian children will emerge victorious. But, as members of the international community, we should seriously reconsider the limit of our capacity to accept the price in lives, blood and misery that Palestinian children must pay for the victory which they deserve.

Since the atrocities against children under occupation remains a crucial issue, it is our firm conviction that consideration of this issue and the need to protect the children under occupation must find its way into the agenda currently being outlined by the Preparatory Committee for consideration at the forthcoming special session.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.34.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): In my capacity as Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for Follow-up to the World Summit for Children, I wish through you, Sir, to thank the President of the General

on this agenda item. We know that he represented his country, Finland, at the World Summit for Children in 1990 and that he has been instrumental in raising political awareness among world leaders of the importance of making issues related to children central to global efforts to reduce poverty and enhance social progress. My thanks also go to all the delegations that have participated in the debate on this item, and for their kind words addressed to the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee.

Before introducing the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.34, I wish to ask Member States to note the following revisions to its text. First, in operative paragraph 7 the words "the invitation" should be inserted after "reiterates" in the second line of the English text, so that the paragraph reads:

"Welcomes the assignment by heads of State and Government of personal representatives to the Preparatory Committee and reiterates the invitation to heads of State and Government who have not assigned personal representatives to consider doing so."

Secondly, in operative paragraph 14 the title of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should be changed to read:

"Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children".

That coincides with the mandate given in resolution 51/77.

I have been informed that there is no quorum present, and that therefore the text of the new paragraph, which has been circulated in the Hall, will be introduced at a later date, when action is to be taken on the draft resolution.

I now have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Preparations for the special session on children", contained in document A/55/L.34, as orally revised. In addition to the sponsors listed in the draft resolution, the following countries have joined as co-sponsors: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Canada, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Guinea, Haiti, Iceland,

Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zambia.

The draft resolution *inter alia* reaffirms the commitments made by heads of State and Government at the World Summit for Children, held in New York in September 1990. It also reaffirms that the special session, while reviewing the achievements in the implementation and results of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for implementing the World Declaration, will undertake a renewed commitment to consider future action for children in the next decade.

The draft resolution stresses that the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child contributes to the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and recommends that a thorough assessment of the 10 years of implementation of the Convention be an essential element in the preparations for the special session.

The draft resolution further welcomes the initiatives and actions undertaken by Governments and relevant organizations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as by regional and subregional organizations, to review the progress achieved since the World Summit for Children, and encourages appropriate national, regional and international preparatory initiatives, with a view to contributing to the preparations for the special session and to building partnerships for and with children.

The draft resolution takes note of the reports and the decisions of the Preparatory Committee, and requests the Secretary-General to submit to the special session, through the Preparatory Committee, a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and Plan of Action, and to make recommendations for further action, elaborating on the best practices noted and on obstacles encountered in the implementation, as well as on measures to overcome those obstacles.

The draft resolution renews the invitation to heads of State or Government to participate in the special session, and encourages those heads of State or Government who have not yet assigned personal representatives to the Preparatory Committee to consider doing so. It highlights the important role of children and young people and encourages States to facilitate and promote their active contribution to the preparatory process and to the special session.

By the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide to convene two substantive sessions of the Preparatory Committee during 2001, and sets the dates for the special session for 19 to 21 September 2001.

The draft resolution expresses appreciation to those Governments which have made financial contributions to the trust fund established for the least developed countries, and towards the preparatory activities undertaken by UNICEF as the substantive secretariat of the special session, and encourages Governments which have not yet contributed to do so.

Finally, the draft resolution decides to include on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly an item entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children".

Before concluding, I wish to thank all delegations, the Executive Director and the staff of UNICEF, as well as the United Nations Secretariat for the tremendous cooperation which the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee have thus far received during the preparatory process. My special thanks go to Ambassador Hanns Schumacher of Germany who, in his capacity as Vice-Chair of the Preparatory Committee, led the informal consultations on this draft resolution. We believe that the draft resolution, when adopted by the General Assembly, will provide a solid basis for the future work of the Preparatory Committee and for the special session.

My delegation hopes that this draft resolution, as orally revised, will be adopted by consensus, thus reaffirming the firm commitment of the international community to giving every child a better future.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken at the sixty-second plenary meeting, this morning, I call on the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): In the

General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, the Holy See appreciates the opportunity to add its voice to those that express the same concerns for today's children and young people.

"Despite the technological progress, children still suffer and die from the lack of basic nourishment or as victims of violence and armed conflicts that they do not even understand. Others are victims of emotional neglect. There are people who poison the minds of the young by passing on to them prejudices and empty ideologies. And today, children are exploited even to the point of being used to satisfy the lowest depravities of adults."

These are not new words, but unfortunately they are just as valid and just as necessary. These are the words that Pope Paul VI addressed to Henry Labouisse, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in 1978, 22 years ago.

This past April, the Commission on Human Rights expressed its concern that the situation of children in many parts of the world remained critical as a result of poverty, inadequate social and economic conditions in an increasingly globalized world economy, pandemics, natural disasters, armed conflicts, displacement, exploitation, illiteracy, hunger, intolerance, disability and inadequate legal protection.

Those issues concerning children, which have demanded the attention of the world for so many years, continue to be the centre of our attention. The recently adopted Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are evidence of that concern. The Holy See, as one of the first signatories of the Convention, is happy to note that it has also signed these two important Protocols, which add to the strength of resolve that the world directs towards the protection of children.

In recent years, the United Nations has been aided by the activities of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to focus on the needs and challenges that children continue to face. The United Nations has also welcomed the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning child labour. These efforts, along with the ongoing attention of the Offices of the United Nations High

and the United Nations agencies, especially UNICEF, continue to work towards the fullest implementation of the Convention and the provisions of the Summit.

The Catholic Church has always recognized that children are the most precious and, at the same time, the most vulnerable members of the human family and in need of the greatest protection. The Holy See was an active participant in the elaboration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the World Summit and, as a Permanent Observer, it participates with special interest in any discussion involving children at the United Nations. The Holy See looks forward to the preparatory work that the offices and agencies that I have mentioned bring to the special session, and is confident that their involvement will greatly help focus the discussions and deliberations that will lead to the fruitful conclusion of the session.

Having applauded the convening of the World Summit for Children, the Holy See looks forward to the upcoming special session as an important event at which the family of nations might once again come together to recommit itself to a greater understanding of the means to address the safeguarding of the well-being and the protection of life and rights of the world's children.

My delegation hopes that the discussions at the upcoming preparatory meetings will centre especially on how to bring peace to situations of armed conflict and violence, end hunger, protect the family, strengthen education, stop discrimination, provide better health care, build stability and maintain security.

At the same time, my delegation also sees the need to recall that the rights of children depend on parents, the family and the entire world community. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms can come only from recognition of and respect for the human dignity shared by each and every person.

It is the hope of the Holy See that the discussions throughout the United Nations system will centre around ways to move forward, rather than simply languish on issues that are never resolved. May the upcoming special session be a concrete step towards achieving this goal.

The Acting President: I call on the observer of Switzerland, in accordance with the decision taken at the sixty-second plenary meeting this morning

Ms. Waldvogel (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Just 10 years ago attention focused on the rights of the child was intensified by the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the Declaration and the Plan of Action at the World Summit, held here in New York. On that occasion, the participating States identified several priority areas and defined specific objectives to improve the situation of children, objectives thought to be attainable by 2000. However, during the decade there were important developments, at times positive, but too often negative, which had a major impact on the situation of children. While we keep the Declaration and the Plan of Action as a framework for analysis, these new facts should be incorporated into the evaluation that we are preparing to undertake at the special session in 2001.

In this respect, Switzerland would like to refer to four points that we believe must be included in the evaluation of the past decade.

First, the assessment of the situation of children should be based on a legal approach, particularly on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as the other international instruments for the protection and the promotion of the rights of the child. Since it refers to an approved international normative framework, a legal approach would allow for a more accurate and systematic joint assessment of the areas in which progress must still be made.

In this context, it will be necessary to consider the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning States' respect for and implementation of the Convention, as well as other mechanisms — universal or regional — to monitor respect for the rights of the child. We think, for example, of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict or of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, particularly the Optional Protocols of the Convention. We take this opportunity to encourage States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify these instruments, if possible without reservations, particularly the Optional Protocols of the Convention.

Secondly, Switzerland believes that the backbone of the methodology can be an approach based on an analysis of the circumstances and causes of lack of

respect for the rights of the child only if it is set within the more general framework of development, in order to identify all the factors having an effect on children, their development and the enjoyment of their rights. Among those factors we would mention human rights, socio-economic development, demography, equality between men and women and democracy.

The third aspect we want to mention relates to the report (A/AC.256/3) of the Secretary-General entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", presented at the last meeting of the Preparatory Committee. That report identified future challenges and problems to which we must give our full attention and specifically integrate into the evaluation of progress made over the last decade. Among those challenges, my delegation would emphasize the prevalence of violence against children — whether State, institutional or private violence; violations of the rights of the child during armed conflict; the acute problem of the exploitation of children, whether economic, sexual or in some other form, which is affecting increasing numbers of children; and the disastrous impact, whether direct or indirect, long-term or short-term, of HIV/AIDS on children.

In both its national and foreign policy, Switzerland is committed to ensuring that all these violations and injustices are ended. Among other things, our bilateral humanitarian assistance has increased its activities with regard to children who are victims of armed conflict, and on the multilateral front we actively support various international organizations. We also hope to strengthen and increase our efforts on behalf of the rights of the child at the special session and in the preparatory process, in collaboration with all the other States and actors concerned.

Finally, a fourth important development that has taken place since the World Summit for Children in 1990 has to do with the recognition that it is necessary to give children and young people the opportunity to participate in decision-making when it concerns them. Indeed, article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that it is our obligation to ensure that children are consulted both at the national and international level when decisions are taken that concern them as individuals with specific rights and duties and as active members of the family unit and of the community. In that regard, Switzerland is committed to encourage and facilitate the participation of children in the various meetings to be held before the special session and during the special session itself. We encourage other States to join in these efforts.

We hope that the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 will be an opportunity to mobilize all the actors concerned — States, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, young people and children, and the private sector. That mobilization could only increase the importance of the event and give greater legitimacy to its results. Switzerland hopes that those results will be in the form of recommendations to ensure better respect for the rights of the child throughout the world, and the adoption of a long-term strategy and a set of specific actions to guarantee that respect.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. As indicated by the representative of Jamaica, action on draft resolution A/55/L.34, as orally revised, will be taken at a later date, to be announced.

The meeting rose at 7:05 p.m.